

AUSTRALIAN & BRITISH

SOCCER

VOL. 21 No. 964 - TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2000

● REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIAN POST ● PUBLICATIONS No. NBQ5726

WEEKLY \$3.00

SOUTHS CHASE THE DREAM



By Bert van Bedaf

On the eve of Australian soccer's biggest moment - after the Socceroos participation at the World Cup for nations in Germany in 1974 - South Melbourne coach, Ange Postecoglou, summed up the magnitude of his undertaking in Brazil over the next fortnight.

"This is a big opportunity for this club and Australian soccer. The players realise that and that it is also a great opportunity for them. They are approaching it in that way.

"We're sick and tired of talking about it. We want to go out and play now and see what we can do," Postecoglou said, as he concentrated on the final minutes of training under a wet and bleak Melbourne evening sky.

The occasion cannot be any higher in profile, as the spotlight falls on Manchester United (English Premier League, FA Cup, European and Intercontinental champion), Vasco Da Gama (Copa Libertadores) and Mexico's Necaxa (Concacaf champion), in group B, together with South.

In Group A are former European Cup holder Real Madrid, Brazilian champion Corinthians, Asian Cup winner Al-Nassr of Saudi Arabia and Morocco's African Confederation champion Raja Casablanca.

They are the best clubs in the world, from their particular regions or championship competitions, and South Melbourne is proudly among them - as champion of Australia and Oceania.

They will fight out the inaugural FIFA world cup for clubs. It won't be South Melbourne to take the title home, and nobody expects that. The obvious candidates are Manchester, local stars Da Gama and Corinthians, and perhaps Real, despite suffering a poor patch in the Spanish league at the moment.

But, so what? Postecoglou, back-to-back championship coach, is caustic about the knockers. "What do people expect? If we're not good enough, who is? Or don't they want an Australian club to take part at all?" he asked.

"If Australian soccer is to improve, this is a step in the right direction. I'm not afraid (of the opposition). I'm rapt that we're going.

And the next time, we go (or another Australian club), we'll get better.

But if we're not going, Australian soccer will never get closer to that higher level.

"But, I believe, the whole team will come back better for the experience. We can't lose from this experience. We'll be better players, a better coach and a better club for the experience," he said.

Olympic Squad Primed

By John Economos

AUSTRALIA'S OLYMPIC coach Raul Blanco flew to Adelaide last Sunday afternoon to meet, assemble and prepare his squad for the 'Four Nation Tournament' that kicks off this Sunday night at the remodelled Hindmarsh Stadium.

Every Olympic team member, including 14 of the Euro-based players of the 20 man squad, had already pledged to Blanco they would be in Adelaide for the 'Four Nation Tournament'.

Last night Blanco from the Olympic team's Motel camp in Adelaide, stated to ABSW: "Most of them are here already.

"I'm just waiting for the rest to fly in from Europe and Japan."

Australia's Olympic team will do combat over six nights with three double headers against the current Olympic Gold Medallist Nigeria, the tough and mobile South Koreans and Egypt.

"The Nigerians are already labelled as the 'Brazilians of Africa', whilst the South Koreans that I saw play against China in Shanghai, are very fast, highly skilled and as always, very tough," stated Blanco.

Causing most concern for Blanco is Perth Glory's fiery and energetic midfielder Kasey Wehrman who is currently serving a three match suspension in the NSL.

Wehrman has recently been sent off from League games twice and this has distressed Blanco to no end.

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Brett Emerton: Captain

World Club Championship
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SOUTH MELBOURNE COLOUR POSTER

**AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH
SOCCER
WEEKLY**

Issue No. 964

Published every Tuesday by
Foreign Language Publications
Pty Ltd
5-13 Garners Ave.,
Marrickville NSW 2204

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VICTORIA:
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Collingwood, 3066.
Tel: (03) 9486-9522
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QUEENSLAND:
Queensland Newspapers
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Tel: (07) 3252-6011

SOUTH AUSTRALIA:
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Tel: (08) 8218-9329

WESTERN AUSTRALIA:
Pan Hellenic Emporium,
67 James Street, Perth WA 6000.
Tel: (08) 9328-4779

Recommended and maximum price.
\$3.00

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issue date.**

**ABSW wishes
South Melbourne
the very best
for their
Brazilian adventure.
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MORE SOUTH'S NEWS PAGES 6, 7 AND 10.

*ABSW wishes all
readers well for the
Millennium tickover.*



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	Adelaide Force	Auckland Kingz	Brisbane	Canberra	Carlton	Gippsland	Marconi	Melbourne K	Newcastle	Northern Spirit	Parramatta	Perth Glory	Sth Melbourne	Sydney Oympic	Sydney United	Wollongong
Adelaide Force	X	2-3 13	20	15	0-0	32	19	34	18 26	30	2-1	22	1-1	28	24	1-2
Auckland Kingz	27 31	X	33	14	0-3	1-1	29	3-3	22	26	16	18	1-0	24	20	3-3 2-4
Brisbane Strikers	2-1	19	X	21	1-1	0-1 34	17	15	28	2-2 32	3-1	24	5-1	30	26	13
Canberra Cosmos	3-0	32	0-1	X	24 28	19	34	18	1-2	13	22	1-1	26	0-1 1-3	7	30
Carlton	23	15	25	2-0 5-1	X	1-1	21	2-1	13	17	1-3	27	30 32	19	3-1	34
Gippsland Falcons	14	28	16 29	33	20	X	0-2	31	1-0	2-0	18 24	0-1	22	0-1	1-1	26
Marconi Stallions	33	0-3	18	16	0-4	30	X	14	24	1-0 28	15	20 31	2-0	26	22	1-0
Melbourne Knights	16	30	0-1	17	22	13	32	X	3-0	0-1	20	0-3 26	24	2-1	1-0 33	28
Newcastle Breakers	1-1 17	1-1	2-1	27	31	23	2-3	25	X	21	29	3-2	16 33	15	14	2-2
Northern Spirit	0-3	3-2	14 22	31	18	27	25 1-1	29	0-2	X	33	16	20	0-1	15	24
Parramatta Power	21	34	23	2-3	26	1-1 17	1-1	2-1	0-1	19	X	3-1	28	13	1-1 30	32
Perth Glory	0-0	17	1-2	23	4-2	15	3-3 13	6-1 21	30	34	25	X	3-1	32	28	19
South Melbourne	25	21	27	2-2	1-2 14	3-0	23	3-0	19 34	2-0	29	4-2	X	17	31	1-1
Sydney Olympic	2-1	1-2	2-0	20 29	33	25	2-1	27	2-2	23	31	14	18	X	34	1-1 21
Sydney United	1-0	2-1	0-0	25	29	21	1-2	19 23	32	0-2	1-2 27	0-1	13	16	X	18
Wollongong Wolves	29	23 25	31	3-0	16	2-0	27	1-2	20	3-0	14	33	2-1	0-4 22	17	X

Numbers indicate which round the match will be played in. Home teams listed vertically.

OLYMPIC SQUAD PRIMED

FOUR NATION TOURNAMENT GETS UNDER WAY

(Continued from page 1)

By John Economos

"Of course this is worrying me and I will be speaking to Kasey most seriously when he gets into camp. "As an Olympic team member this is a major concern for me.

"I don't expect this from any player in an Olympic squad. It is a very big concern for me and something that must be solved right away.

The highly talented and tough Hayden Foxe, most likely to be Australia's Olympic sweeper, and currently playing in Japan's J-League for Eddie Thomson's side Sanfrecce Hiroshima, is due into Adelaide today (Tuesday).

Foxe played and starred last Saturday night in the Emperors Cup final which Hiroshima lost 0-2 to Nagoya Grampus 8.



Stephen Laybutt: In Action recently against Manchester United

The lanky red-haired sweeper arrived in Sydney last night (Monday) but was extended permission by Blanco to spend the night with parents to give them Christmas gifts he brought from Japan, before flying this morning to Adelaide to join the Olympic squad for training.

Lucas Neill, currently with Millwall F.C. in England, will arrive in Adelaide tomorrow.

Former South Melbourne midfield playmaker Billy Damianos who is currently in Greece with Xanthi

Skoda F.C. flew into Adelaide last night.

The Olympic captain and right flanker Brett Emerton, was granted permission by Blanco to remain behind in Sydney and play with his club Sydney Olympic yesterday at Belmore Sports Ground in a rescheduled match against the Perth Glory.

Before Emerton flew to Adelaide first thing this morning, he stated: "We're all really looking forward to playing in front of a home crowd again.

"Our last few tournaments have all been played

OLYMPIC SQUAD

ALLSOP	Daniel	(Manchester City)
BASER	Tansel	(Trabzonspor FC)
BOSNAR	Eddy	(Sydney United)
BRESCIANO	Marco	(Empoli FC)
BURNS	Jacob	(Parramatta Power)
COYNE	Chris	(West Ham)
CULINA	Jason	(AFC Ajax)
DAMIANOS	Bill	(Xanthi Skoda)
DIDULICA	Joseph	(AFC Ajax)
EMERTON	Brett	(Sydney Olympic)
FOX	Hayden	(Sanfrecce Hiroshima)
GRELLA	Vince	(Empoli FC)
LAYBUTT	Stephen	(Bellmare Hiratsuka)
		(Parramatta Power)
NEILL	Lucas	(Millwall)
RIZZO	Nick	(Crystal Palace)
STERJOVSKI	Mile	(Parramatta Power)
WEHRMAN	Kasey	(Perth Glory)
ZANE	Clayton	(Molde FC)
ZELIC	Ivan	(Adelaide City Force)
ZOIS	Peter	(NAC Breda)

overseas, so it will be great to have the support of our own fans right behind us, particularly with the 2000 Olympics being just nine months away.

"The current Olympic champions Nigeria will be very tough opposition and Egypt could be a surprise factor as we've never played them.

"As far as the South Koreans are concerned, we have a point to prove against them," threatened Emerton.

THE DRAW

SUNDAY 9/1/2000

6.00pm Egypt vs South Korea
8.15pm AUSTRALIA vs Nigeria

WEDNESDAY 12/1/2000

6.00pm South Korea vs Nigeria
8.15pm AUSTRALIA vs Egypt

SATURDAY 15/1/2000

6.00pm Nigeria vs Egypt
8.15pm AUSTRALIA vs South Korea

DIDULICA LIVING THE AJAX DREAM

By Roy Hay

Ajax keeper Joey Didulica left Geelong yesterday (Monday) for Adelaide and training camp with the Olyroos ahead of the four-nation tournament which will form a crucial part of Australia's preparations for the Sydney Olympic Games.

Australia plays Olympic title holder Nigeria, Asian leader South Korea and another African powerhouse in Egypt beginning on Sunday at the Hindmarsh Stadium.

Coach Raul Blanco has included 14 overseas players in the squad of 20

including two keepers, Didulica and Peter Zois who both ply their trade in Holland.

The Geelong born 22-year-old spent Christmas and New Year with his family and on Sunday he talked about what the move to Dutch superclub Ajax had meant to him.

"You go from training four times a week to training seven times. You have everything you need. We have a weight room and world class indoor halls.

Whatever you want you've got. So there is no reason not to improve to your maximum level."

Attention to skills and detail is phenomenal and the young keeper has been working at remodelling his kicking with

either foot.

"I always had a bit of a curl on my kicks. I've always been told, when you get a back pass under pressure, (kick) as long as possible. Long, high to the strikers.

"But since I went to Ajax they want me to kick it hard and direct without any curls so the strikers can run on to balls or hold it up nicely.

"Now when you play the games, you realise that pass went 50 metres direct with my left foot.

"People are watching your every move at training, it is vital and they ask questions if you don't put in every time. If

you are not sprinting as fast, they ask you why. It is a great system. Your first touch has to be perfect.

"In order to get to number one I have to get to the stage where the club is confident I can handle the pressure in front of 60,000 people watching.

"You have to get the technique right, then you have to get the consistency."

Didulica was third in line at Ajax when he arrived but senior keeper Stanley Menzo has retired and is now working with Didulica.

"Hopefully he can show me a few tricks. Fred Grim is the number one keeper now. He has been understudy to Edwin

van der Saar, now at Juventus. He is more reserved perhaps because he knows I am challenging for his position."

With Ajax in a rebuilding phase Didulica has a great chance to break through to the seniors, but he already faces the club versus country dilemma of all the European stars.

Ajax is not keen for him to be away for four weeks on Olyroo duty and the problem will be more acute in September when the Olympics occur in the middle of the European league season.

Sometimes people forget just what sacrifices and choices our top class soccer players have to make.



Joe Didulica: Pictured with his mother Mary and some of his football memorabilia including David Beckham's shirt and Ronaldo's boots

GAME POSTPONED

Marconi Stallions

VS

Parramatta Power

The Match scheduled for Sunday 9th of January at Marconi Stadium has been postponed due to Parramatta having three representative players in the Four-Nation Olympic tournament in Adelaide.



The Match date is TBA



The Good Oil ... The Good Oil ...

THE AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIC team which kicks off in the 'Four Nation Tournament' this Sunday night in Adelaide, faces three very impressive opponents in Nigeria, Egypt and South Korea.

For starters two of these nations have qualified for the Sydney 2000 Olympics in September with the third almost certain to do so also.

Nigeria as current holders of the Olympic Gold Medal automatically qualify, whilst the Korean Republic has already won through its qualifiers.

Egypt is still currently involved in their respective qualifiers.



Hayden Foxe: Most likely Australia's Olympic sweeper.

All three nations are guaranteed to give Australia a real acid test and severe run for their money in Adelaide.

PARRAMATTA POWER's young goalkeeper Barney Smith and central defender Michael Santalab had anything but a Happy Christmas.

Although the guy in the Red Suit and red cap didn't visit the flat the two young Power players share, another guy did, and without the players' permission.

Whilst the two Power players were at training, their mystery visitor assumed to be wearing a black mask and dark clothing, broke into their flat and stole watches, cash and much of their Soccer gear.

Seems to be the trend for Power players.

Just recently, giant stopper Joe Vrkic had his car



Barney Smith: The Power's young goalkeeper.

stolen whilst playing against Sydney United at Edensor Park.

PABLO CARDOZO, Sydney Olympic's ace goalscorer, will not be shifting to join Spanish second division side Cordoba.



Pablo Cardozo: Staying with Olympic till the end of the season.

The highly skilled striker has decided to wait till the end of the season when he is out of contract and the terms, (if still 'alive'), will become far more attractive.

MILE STERJOVSKI, the Parramatta Power's stylish striker, last Tuesday night knocked up his 50th match in the NSL whilst playing against League leaders Sydney Olympic.



Mile Sterjovski: The Power's international striker.

Instead of the night being a joyous occasion for him, first his side lost 1-2 to Olympic, then Mile had what looked like a legitimate goal disallowed from his well taken indirect free kick.

SOUTHERN SMELBOURNE's 'Brazilian crusade' into FIFA's inaugural World Club Championship kicks off this Friday (7th January) with the first battle against Brazil's giants, Vasco da Gama.

Souths' matches in the Championship will be telecast live from Rio de Janeiro's mega-structured Soccer arena, the Maracana Stadium.

DANIEL WATKINS, the Northern Spirit's 19-year-old striker who was loaned out for the season to

the Canberra Cosmos, last Tuesday night must have felt rather strange when he played for Canberra against his 'Mother Club'.



Daniel Watkins: Played for his club against his club.

Spirit's Head Coach Graham Arnold explained: "We let Daniel go because we had plenty of strikers and thought he would be better served to have a year at Canberra where he would get first team football. He'll be back with us next season."

THE 2000 Oceania Nations Cup, the six team tournament, will be staged in Tahiti on June 17 to 30th.

The very much lop-sided Cup greatly favours, as always, Australia and New Zealand who automatically qualify against the winners of the much weaker two Groups, the Melanesian and Polynesian Cups.

Round 15 matches this weekend have had some amendments made.

Northern Spirit's clash at North Sydney Oval against Sydney United will now



Wynton Rufer: Auckland Kingz' Player/Coach.



Paul Trimboli: South's magical captain.



By John Economos

start at 8 pm and not 7.30pm as originally scheduled whilst Marconi's battle with the Parramatta Power will now kick off at 5 pm and not 6pm.

Carlton's home game against the Auckland Kingz at Olympic Park will now kick off at 8.15pm.

SOCCER FANS must be sick and tired, (if not fed up to the teeth), of reading and hearing 'professional opinions' written or expressed by non-Soccer journalists right across Australia. Many do it and leave to go on unchecked. Either Rugby League or Rules journo's, arrogantly jump in and have a lash at Soccer.

Why in the hell do they buy in on a sport they know very, very little about, and have the audacity to even express their certainly most unwanted, and erroneous opinions?

The main reason over the many years that this has been tolerated or allowed to happen, is the fact that our Soccer authorities have always lacked the balls to counter-attack these culprits or media 'corporate refugees' that take great pleasure and relish in putting the boot into our code every moment any controversial topic concerning Soccer, surfaces.

If there is a crowd riot or even minor disturbance, the 'non-pro-non-Soccer-journo's' immediately jump in to give us headlines with their unqualified 'opinions' thus lambasting Soccer.

For example we have read about 'riots' that erupted at Belmore Oval late last season, riots that in fact didn't happen.

Lately, since Soccer Australia's ludicrous and dreadful League Criteria was released, chiefly advocating the League be cut back from 16 to 12 clubs, again the 'non-Soccer-pro-journo's' have jumped in and written or expressed their opinions.

One such dopey, (nasty in person), but well-known Sydney journo, specialising in God knows what sport, but always has an opinion about tennis, Rugby Union and League, and even cricket, shot his mouth off recently that the League should be cut back to 12 and rid itself of the 'ethnic flavour'. How the hell would he know?

He went on to even inform us, (fans of Soccer plus all other sports), that the Adelaide Sharks had this season 'merged' with Adelaide City to form the Adelaide Force in their bid to become 'non-ethnic'.

What a clown! What audacity!

He then continues with his arrogance by strongly steaming ahead with his recommendation that 'Marconi can either merge with Sydney Olympic or go and play in the State League'.

'Hipshot', you don't come to our games. You know little about Australian Soccer. You're a deep-seated racist despite your vocal denial. So please ignore Soccer and write nothing about it at all.

DAMIAN MORI, Adelaide City's top goalscorer, after his first goal in the NSL back in 1989, has since added another 132 scalps to now be



Damian Mori: Third most goals scored in the NSL.

equal with former World Cup captain John Kosmina on 133 goals, just four behind the all-time record of most goals scored in the NSL by Rod Brown. Mori has scored three hat-tricks in the League, the last against the Northern Spirit just before Christmas.

PETER ZORBAS, Sydney Olympic's 20-year-old midfielder, last

Tuesday night at the Parramatta Stadium, late in the second half and in the space of three or four seconds, had climbed to the dizzy heights of uncontrollable jubilation before suddenly being cruelly smacked down to earth in total despair and humiliation by a stupid and totally senseless red card.

With the scores locked at 1-1 against the Parramatta Power, the energetic Zorbas scored a magnificent solo goal 17 minutes from fulltime. This goal not only broke the deadlock, but ultimately proved to be the winner for Olympic.



Gary Power: Your urgent intervention is now demanded.

Immediately after scoring, (and most understandably so as it was a great goal for any player to knock in), the Olympic midfielder with uncontrollable joy, raced towards the Ray Price Grandstand side touchline, did a forward somersault and skidded down onto his knees with arms stretched up and reaching for the heavens as all his Olympic team-mates swarmed in to hug him.

Fact 1. Zorbas had previously been booked in the 10th minute for a foul by the astute match referee Gerry Connolly.

Fact 2. Immediately after scoring his excellent goal, Zorbas, whilst skidding on the grass with wild joy, his great momentum carried him across, and over, the touchline.

Big deal. Technically this is an offence for a player to leave the playing perimeter.

Whilst the Stadium was still roaring and applauding the goal, referee Connolly saw it fit to promptly reach in his pocket and drag out a yellow card and flash it at Zorbas for the second time.

Fact 3. Being Zorbas' second yellow, Connolly then promptly reached

again and drew out the red card to send off the now totally shattered and most bewildered Olympic midfielder.

Why wasn't some plain commonsense utilised?

Was it that technically-essential to book Zorbas for skidding over the line?

Then for God's sake, why wasn't the great Manchester United's veteran substitute striker Teddy Sheringham booked in the two indelible Cup Finals last season when he scored and deliriously raced to the FENCE with electric and colourful excitement?

And here we're talking about the F.A. Cup and

European Cup Finals. Back to the Power vs Olympic match.

Fact 4. Much earlier in the game, in an unrelated incident, Connolly completely ignored a crystal clear, yet violent piece of reaction, by an Olympic defender, as he raced in and grappled the Power's elegant striker Mile Sterjovski.

No red card whatsoever. Despite what the NSL, and most clubs tell us, the reality is that crowds right across Australia are alarmingly down.

One of the most significant reasons for these 'southerly-trending' crowds is because our games are lacking skill, excitement, flair and colour.

In a nutshell the 'entertainment element' is missing, or rapidly diminishing.

The standard, (more importantly the consistency) of refereeing, as all NSL coaches will readily agree with you, is very poor of late.

Our Soccer crowds are starving for excitement and colour such as Zorbas briefly displayed last Tuesday night.

Why on earth then ridiculously penalise the kid, and more importantly, deprive even the paying

The Good Oil ... The Good Oil ...

customer of excitement?

Let's all then be totally technically correct, by the book, and play games in ultimately and totally empty grounds.

Last Tuesday night, the Parramatta Power had attracted a season record 10,018.

Nobody was happy with the sending off of Zorbas, including the coaching staff of the Parramatta Power.

The situation is seriously out of control.

Australia's Director of Referees, Mr Gary Power's attention and urgent intervention, is seriously needed now before a real crisis hits all our gates at every League match.

BUDDY FARAH, Marconi's solid 22-year-old defender, was rushed to hospital last week following last Tuesday night's clash against the Perth Glory in Western Australia.

The match was played in almost 40 degree temperatures that melted most of the players.

Farah, suffering from severe dehydration was rushed to hospital straight after the match after collapsing at the

team's hotel.

It was serious enough for Farah to be kept overnight for observation. He was allowed to leave the following morning after the all clear from a cardiologist.



Buddy Farah: Rushed to hospital in Perth.

The concern was so great that Perth Glory's GM Roger Lefort was on the phone to Club Marconi as late as 48 hours later checking on Farah's well being.

Full marks to the Glory. Thankfully, Buddy is now feeling a lot better.

PERTH GLORY's home match against the Auckland Kingz that was initially scheduled for January 23rd at Perth Oval, has now be shifted forward to be played on Sunday

March 26th at 4pm.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC has advised us that a new form of admission is being introduced to its home ground the Belmore Sports Ground.

As from yesterday (Monday 3rd Jan) for its home match against the Perth Glory, Soccer fans were able to purchase tickets for the Hill Area Only at a discount price of just \$5.00.



This applies to adults, concessions and children.

Children Under 13 as always, are extended free admission.

For access to the Hill Area, fans must enter the ground via the Tudor Street entrance.

For yesterday's match only, all children Under 12 received a free Sydney Olympic blue cap.

CLUB MARCONI as has been noted by this column on numerous occasions, has again displayed class and style.

This time such style and



consideration was directed at the Club's 24,865 Members.

Just prior to Christmas, every Member received in the mail a glossy copy of the extremely very well put together, rich in colour, Club News Magazine, Plus, a Year 2000 Calendar.

Club Marconi appears to be well up to date on everything 'the Palace' does.

SBS-TV starting from this Friday (Jan 7th), will telecast Live and direct from Brazil all of South Melbourne's matches in FIFA's inaugural World Club Championship, plus the Final itself.



All matches will be played in the morning (a.e.d.s.t.).

The telecast timeslots are as follows:

• Friday 7th January: Vasco Da Gama vs South Melbourne — (Eastern states 9.30 am, South Australia 9.00 am, Queensland 8.30 am, Darwin 8.00 am, Perth 6.30 am).

• Sunday 9th January: South Melbourne vs Necaxa (same time slots as above).

• Wednesday 12th January: Manchester United vs South Melbourne — (Eastern states 7.00 am, South Australia 6.30 am, Queensland 6.00 am, Darwin 7.00 am, Perth 5.30 am).

• Saturday 15th January: World Club Championship Final (Eastern states 8.30 am, South Australia 8.00 am, Queensland 7.30 am, Darwin 7.00 am, Perth 5.30 am).

FRANK FARINA was the first Australian born to become a fulltime national coach up until this week.

For the past 19 years, Australia became a net-exporter of Soccer players, the reverse of what we had been used for since Day 1.

In the past eight years, Australia also became a net-exporter of club coaches that have included such names as those of Alan Vest, Eddie Thomson, Mickey Hickman, Ronnie Smith, Steve Darby

and Michael Urakalo.

But now it seems Australia has started exporting 'national coaches'.

This week a second Australian born coach has been given the national coaching position of a

nation.

Next week's issue of 'ABS' will bring to our readers an exclusive interview of Australia's latest 'high profile' coach. And isn't he keen.

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDLY

AT MARCONI STADIUM

MARCONI STALLIONS VS POBEDA PRILEP

(Macedonian 1st Division Club)

Wednesday 12th January, 2000
Kick Off at 7.30pm

Tickets available from Club Marconi

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CONCESSION/STUDENT:	\$10.00
UNDER 12:	\$5.00
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WORLD CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

FULL SQUAD GOES TO BRAZIL

By Bert van Bedaf

South Melbourne will take a full squad of 23 players to Brazil, including three goal keepers, Chris Jones, Milan Udvaracz and recent signing Chris Roche. It is a FIFA requirement to bring three 'keepers.

South's squad counts a lot of experience at overseas and domestic levels. There's Socceroos Fausto DeAmicis, Goran Lozanovski and captain Paul Trimboli, Olyroos Michael Curcija and Con Blatsis, as well as New Zealand international Vaughan Coveny and John Anastasiadis, who played in the Greek first division.



South Melbourne: Ready for the world's best.

Most of the players have also soaked up the pressure of NSL finals football and passed the test by winning two titles in the last two seasons.

South coach Ange Postecoglou said he would not want to point out any individuals but rather believed in the group effort to carry the team through the club world cup tournament, saying "I'm looking at it as a team."

Just about every one of our players has played NSL finals or higher."

He agreed South would need to make sure it ran a tight defence before venturing into the opposition's terrain.

"We'll adopt a cautious approach. We can't open up." But he added, "We're not concerned with results as such. All we want to do is play well."

We want to do the best we can and look like we belong in the tournament.

And, if there's a game to be won, we'll try and win it."

He believed South Melbourne was capable of giving a good account of itself. "I believe we can hold our own in a second division of any European

Mexican team Necaxa beat US Major League Soccer club DC United to the CONCACAF title. It has six international players, including midfielder Carlos Hermosillo, and it will also prove to be a tough opponent for South.

Manchester United will also bring its full squad, with Socceroos captain Mark Bosnich in goal.

Postecoglou said he had not decided on a starting 11, but former understudy Chris Jones is most likely to be the first choice 'keeper, ahead of Hungarian import Milan Udvaracz, who found himself suspended for two matches on a spitting charge and lost his spot to Jones.

"Chris has done well. He's a likely starter," Postecoglou revealed.

"But I haven't thought yet of a starting 11," he said. "We'll have to see the conditions first. Who's coped best during the flight (25 hours) and how well we acclimatise (to a 30-plus degrees Celsius heat)," he said.

Especially against world team Manchester, South will need to produce its best football, which may see Fausto DeAmicis pitted against David Beckham, Con Blatsis against Andy Cole, Michael Curcija against Jaap Stam and Paul Trimboli against Roy Keane.

Over the last few weeks Postecoglou has been quietly experimenting with different formations to prepare for the European, South American and Latin styles he will encounter.

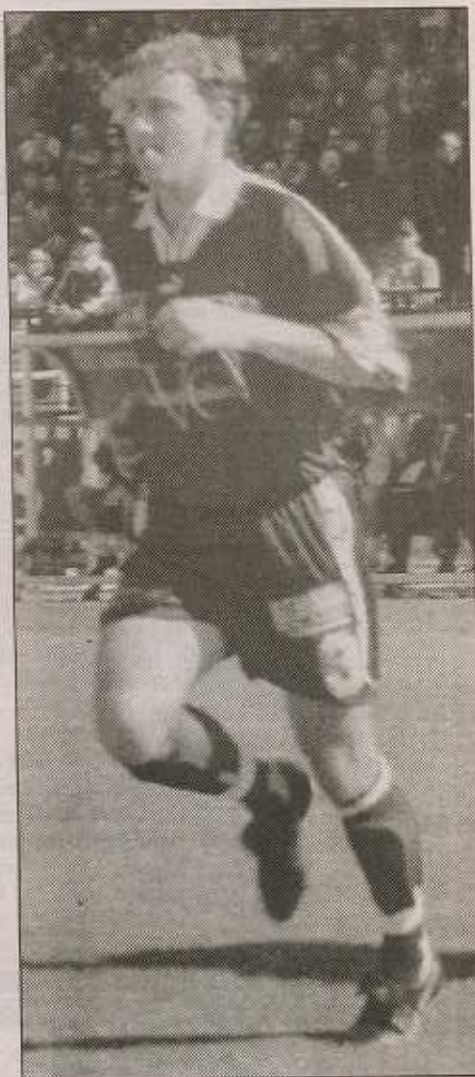
From his customary 5-3-2 sweeper formation, the South coach has had his players become accustomed to a 4-4-2 and a 4-3-3 playing pattern. "We've had the players adopt to new styles and there are options depending our opposition. We can play with one striker or two, but we're ready to apply different options," Postecoglou said.

Postecoglou did not view the contest in terms of coach versus coach, of him against (Sir) Alex Ferguson.

"I don't think the coach has much influence. I see it more as my team against another team. It is a duel between teams not between coaches," Postecoglou said.

"Manchester has world class players, who have the right attitude. They do the right things as a team and do not play as individuals. That's what made them the best team in the world," he said.

Postecoglou believed the experience South Melbourne will take from Brazil will put it on the



Paul Trimboli: Will need to be at his magical best.

road towards another NSL finals berth and possibly a record third national championship in a row.

"After the tournament, we're still confident we can make the (NSL) finals. This (tournament) will help us and give us a great deal of confidence."

Any one of our players can come out of this tournament with confidence, having played at that higher level. What we've learned we'll put into practice," he said.

SOUTH'S BIG STEP

By Bert van Bedaf

There's no way of paraphrasing moon-walker Neil Armstrong on this score. This is no small step for South Melbourne and a big step for all others.

This is a big step for South Melbourne and a huge step for Australian soccer-kind as Australia's title holder and Oceania champion is ready to take part in FIFA's inaugural World Cup for clubs in Brazil over the next fortnight, January 5-14.

South Melbourne is in Group B with Manchester United (English Premier League, FA Cup, European and Intercontinental champion), Vasco Da Gama (Copa Libertadores) and Mexico's Necaxa (CONCACAF champion). South will be based in Rio de Janeiro at the Maracana stadium.

In Group A are former European Cup holder Real Madrid, Brazilian champion Corinthians,

Asian Cup winner Al-Nassr of Saudi Arabia and Morocco's African Confederation champion Raja Casablanca.

An "over the moon" South Melbourne president George Vasilopoulos described his club's participation in the tournament as the "Millennium Dream". He firmly believed South Melbourne was blessed.

"It is the dream of the millennium. This is happening at the dawn of the new millennium and, I guess, we're just blessed to be there and participate. Playing against Manchester United and Vasco da Gama is the dream of any club," Vasilopoulos said.

"It is probably the biggest step a club has taken in the history of the national soccer league. It will show how far advanced or how far behind we are, because we are the national champions of the last couple of years and this will be a true indication if we can match it will the world's best," he said.



Nick Orlic: Will be the key to South's defence.

WORLD CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

FAUSTO EYES BECKHAM

By Bert van Bedaf

Depending on what might happen along the way, South Melbourne vice-captain and left wingback Fausto DeAmicis is scheduled to meet Manchester United midfielder David Beckham in the third and last group match of the FIFA club world cup tournament, starting on January 5 in Brazil.

DeAmicis, who moved to South from the Melbourne Knights and has won two national titles with each club, is taking it one dream at the time.

"It's great to get there and on the park and experience it all with this team to compete against the world's best clubs," an excited DeAmicis said.

"It's going to be a fantastic time for us, regardless of the results.

We're going to enjoy it and give it our best. I never thought this could happen to Australian soccer in a million years," he said.



Fausto DeAmicis: Looking forward to a duel with David Beckham.

DeAmicis began his senior career in the Victorian Premier League with the now defunct Brunswick United Juventus club to make his mark later in the NSL and briefly with the Socceroos under Terry Venables.

Now he's about to reach the greatest moment of his distinguished career so far and there's nothing that's going to stop him from savoring the moment.

"I look back and the only way I could have had a place like this (in a world tournament) if I was based in Europe and played for a European team.

"For me and all of us, this is like going to a World Cup, representing your club and Australia and playing against these big teams.

"Never in my time of playing soccer would I have thought this would happen to me and I'm very grateful and thankful that the opportunity has come. I know and I'm sure, all of us are going to cherish every moment of it," he said.

DeAmicis is aware, he's in the spot where Beckham will be his likely

opponent.

"Everyone is telling me, it's David Beckham," he said.

"But then again, there's three games to be played, two games prior to ours, and hopefully I'll pull through and be fit and strong enough on the day.

"And that he's playing also. Because if Manchester won their (first) two (group) games, which means they're probably through (to the final), they might put in another player and I won't get the chance to play Beckham.

"It's funny, because you want to play against him and at the same time, if you do play against him and you get destroyed what are people going to think?

"But then again, any other player would love to be in my position, so I'm looking forward to the challenge. Manchester are a great side and I've watched Beckham lots of times. But when you're out on the park, it's man to man basically and it will be another challenge," DeAmicis sized up his chances.



David Beckham: Will be pitted against South Melbourne's Fausto De Amicis.

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FOR THE INFORMATION OF MEMBERS AND THEIR GUESTS

Oceania Player of the Year



HARRY KEWELL



(Australia and Leeds United)

Australia's Harry Kewell was named last week as Oceania's Footballer of the Year. The Leeds United striker was a clear winner in the annual poll of coaches, administrators and journalists, finishing 46

votes clear of Celtic's Australian striker Mark Viduka. Ned Zelic, who walked out on the Australian national team in November after a row with management, finished third in the poll while New Caledonia's Christian Karembeu, the

1998 Oceania player of the year, was fourth. Kewell will receive his trophy at a FIFA award night in Germany next month.



Harry Kewell: Oceania's finest for 1999.



A younger Harry Kewell: Prior to the ill-fated Iran match at the MCG.



Kewell as you like.



Mark Viduka: A deserved runners-up spot.

1999 Oceania Player of the Year THE VOTES

115	HARRY KEWELL	(Leeds United, Australia)
69	MARK VIDUKA	(Glasgow Rangers, Aust.)
37	NED ZELIC	(Munich, Australia)
34	Christian Karembeu	(New Caledonia)
29	Tony Vidmar	(Australia)
21	Mark Bosnich	(Australia)
12	Danny Hay	(New Zealand)
11	Michael Utting	(New Zealand)
11	Mark Burton	(New Zealand)
10	Mark Schwarzer	(Australia)
6	Esala Masi	(Fiji)
5	Vaughan Coveny	(New Zealand)
5	Paul Okon	(Australia)
5	Marama Vahirua	(Tahiti)
4	Batram Suri	(Solomon Islands)
2	Aaron Lines	(New Zealand)
1	Craig Moore	(Australia)

It is the first time Kewell has featured in the placings and follows his performance with Leeds in the English Premiership and his matches for Australia.



Mark Viduka: Just as cool.



Christian Karembeu: Last year's winner finished fourth in 1999.



Ned Zelic: A great season with 1860 Munich saw him poll third.



Danny Hay: The highest placed New Zealander and seventh overall.

AUSTRALIAN FEATURE

RICHARD JOHNSON Seven Years to an Overnight Success

By Vince Battiato

Seven years to become an overnight success. That's what it took our newest Socceroo, Richard Johnson, to get to the top. Richard who? That's right, Richard Johnson - I'd never heard of him either until recently.

From the NSW Hunter Valley region, Johnson recently joined the list of Socceroos who have never kicked a ball in the local National competition. He headed for the big time abroad as a teenager joining the likes of Harry Kewell, Craig Moore, Josip Skoko and Hayden Foxe.

Johnson set off for England in November 1991 for a two-week trial with Tottenham, where he was under the strict guidance of now ex-Socceroo coach Terry Venables. Things went well and two weeks turned into three months. Unfortunately, with 25 apprentices all dreaming of the same glory, a contract was not offered.

Although disheartened, it was to become one of Johnson's best career decisions to go to Watford. Now seven years later and at age 25, Johnson's loyalty to Watford has

seen him climb all the divisions with the club and become a first team regular in the Premier League.

"It's a big gap from Division One to the Premier League," he said, "The same mistakes we were making last season are getting punished now."

He has just signed a lucrative three-year contract with the club and has represented his country against four-time World Champions Brazil. Of the 25 apprentices at Tottenham, only three ever made the grade.

"I was disappointed at not being picked for the Socceroos when Venables was in charge," he said, "but I got my chance now and it's a dream come true."

Johnson made his debut for the Socceroos against Brazil at Stadium Australia on Sunday November 14. In what was a below par performance by the Aussies, Johnson made a solid start to what looms a long international career.

"I was really nervous early and in the first half I didn't really know

where I was supposed to be some of the time," he said, "but in the second half we played much better as a unit and I thought I did alright."

Johnson was made to feel right at home with the Socceroos as he openly admitted that he knew nobody when he joined the camp. Ironically, Johnson roomed with Danny Tiatto - arguably Australia's best in a losing side.

Nervous as Johnson was on debut, he went out and played his natural game. Just another Premier League match. That's what Frank Farina had told him just prior to kick off. A player with a big heart, Johnson did just that, getting stuck in, putting his body on the line for his country. Australia could do with one or two more players like him.

He models his game on Manchester United's Roy Keane who he describes as 'A powerhouse in midfield, he plays from box to box'. Johnson, who is not a physically intimidating player, certainly ran his legs into the ground for his country. Even Keane would have been happy of Johnson's first international performance.

In light of the recent misgivings within the soccer fraternity, what



Richard Johnson: Finally hits the international stage.

with the Kewell and Ronaldo debacle against Brazil and Socceroos stalwart Ned Zelic storming out of the camp and into retirement, it is pleasing to see that loyalty for club and country still exists.

Just ask Richard Johnson, I'm sure we'll get plenty of opportunities between now and when we qualify for the 2002 World Cup.



Australia pose for the cameras prior to the match against Brazil at Stadium Australia. Johnson, who debuted, is pictured furthest to the right in the front row.



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Eastern Suburbs Wanderers
Vs

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Blacktown City Demons

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U21s — 5pm
1st Grade — 7pm

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VS
MACARTHUR RAMS**

GROUND:
Andrews Rd, Penrith

DATE:
Saturday January 8

TIME:
Under 18 — 3.00pm
Under 21 — 5.00pm
1st Grade — 7.00pm



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NASTY BLUEPRINT

Dear Sir,

Allow me to begin by saying that I am a soccer supporter first and then a Sydney Olympic FC supporter.

I travel to watch Northern Spirit at North Sydney Oval, attend Marconi home games as well as Sydney Olympic matches, also before Optus Pay TV was introduced in Sydney I travelled to Wollongong to watch their home games on Friday nights. I also watch replay matches of the National Soccer League on Optus etc.

Previous to this I attended most of Apia Leichhardt home matches at Lambert Park.

As you can see I have followed a lot of NSL soccer and I enjoy the game in Australia.

But reading in the last couple of days the media on Soccer Australia's Soccer 21 blueprint on the future of the game I cannot help but think that the board who currently

administer the game really don't understand the state our game is in.

I say this because the very league has NO major sponsor. Is it not the work of the Soccer Australia board to come up with a major sponsor?

Soccer Australia claim to have a blueprint for Australian Soccer's future, but there is no one on the Soccer Board who can honestly believe that their expectations can be met by anyone — and I mean anyone.

Which club can stand up and say that they can sustain a working capital of no less than \$3 million and then stand up and claim that they can sustain operating losses of \$1 million a year in each of the first three years of operation — can any club of the 16

currently in the NSL meet these expectations?

No. And Soccer Australia knows this. We all saw what happened in the NRL war — clubs been made to meet criteria — mergers — axing of clubs.

All this damaged the game of Rugby League but one must make a point here, they can afford it, they have News Limited and Optus funding them. Soccer Australia has no one funding it — no one.

They depend on the very clubs that they want to axe, how ironic.

Those very clubs pay Soccer Australia various fees just to compete in the league, those same clubs give Soccer Australia a percentage when they sell a player overseas.



I for one would like soccer in Australia to be "revamped" in a manner that can be logically implemented.

They say that Sydney Olympic is in danger, well as a life long supporter and a member of the club it would be a bitter pill to swallow. But really, can someone at Soccer Australia tell me how having Nick Politis as chairman of the club puts it in danger.

He is one of the most successful and respected Business figures in Australia. He is also one of the wealthiest. He is Chairman of prominent rugby League club Sydney City Roosters and is on the powerful NRL and ARL boards, and a respected figure on both sides.

We should be welcoming business figures like him to soccer for the sake of the future of the game.

And what does Soccer Australia do? They release a blueprint on what Australian

soccer should look like.

Soccer Australia should not let this turn into a court riddled saga. They should sit down with all 16 clubs and come up with a logical solution on were Australian Soccer should go in the future.

This I believe is the only blueprint that Soccer Australia should be looking at.

Bill Diakos, Campsie, NSW.

I tell you what Bill, if there was ever any doubt about what the Australian Soccer supporter is like - then my friend you might just be the mould. Do you have time for anything else?

Your passion is admirable and I share it entirely. I, like you, would love to see the game progress forward and I believe with a little commonsense and some hard work that Australian Soccer may finally find its feet. - Ed

FARINA IN THE DEEP END

Dear Sir,

I hate to say this but I am going to anyway. It looks like to me that appointing Frank Farina as our National coach is a mistake even at this early stage.

He has been thrown into the deep end before he is ready as far as I am concerned.

The early signs are that he is having problems with massive egos from some of the big name overseas players as well as their availability for friendly matches, as the upcoming Chile games in February will soon show.

If the Ned Zelic case is anything to go by, then young Frank could be in for a torrid couple of years ahead. I know that everyone involved in the game wanted to see a changing of the guard and a truly local born person taking over the National Coaching position.

I find it hard to fathom or come to grips with the situation of having an Olympic National team coach, with 20 years seniority as well as 20 years coaching experience more than our senior national coach.

I doubt whether there is such a set up anywhere else in the world today.

Okay so Frank has the runs on the board as far as his playing career went over Raul Blanco, but coaching is an entirely different caper today than it was back in the Rale Rasic days, when all the national team players were locally based and played for peanuts.

If Raul has been made the scapegoat for Australia's national team not making the last Confederation Cup against New Zealand, then Soccer Australia should hang its head in shame. If he is good enough to be the Olympic national team coach, he should be good enough for the top job as well in my book.

As usual Soccer politics has reared its ugly head again by putting a young inexperienced man in charge of getting us to the World Cup finals in Korea and Japan in 2002, when I doubt very much whether he can do it.



Frank Farina: Not respected.

I think Raul and Frank both have their strengths and both are very different men - as players, coaches and people. It's O.K. to voice your opinion but there is also such a thing called respect.

And with all respect to Raul Blanco I believe you have shown none to Frank Farina. The man has lead us twice. He did it against the World's most successful footballing nation. That was a baptism of fire in itself. After a poor first performance he rallied his troops to the cause for the second match. Not easy!!!

You've already got the guy hung, drawn and quartered. Give us a break, and show our national team AND its coach some deserved respect.

I look forward to World Cup qualification 2002. - Ed

In my mind the coaching positions should have been reversed with Raul Blanco, as Frank should have been held back until the 2006 World Cup campaign.

If Raul was unacceptable for political reasons, then Branco Culina would have been the better option as National coach at this stage.

Lets all pray that the decision to throw Frank Farina to the Lions doesn't come back to haunt Australia come November 2001.

Dominic Scullino, Nerang, Qld.

WOLVES FED TO THE DOGS

Dear Sir,

Word that the Wollongong Wolves may be axed from the "new look" NSL has caused a bit of disharmony in the area.

A few years ago when the Wolves qualified for the final playoffs it appeared that they could recapture the glory days of the old South Coast Utd and Corrimal clubs. Alas it turned out to be nothing more than a flash in the plan.

The status quo that has existed for the last 30 years in Wollongong where soccer is the poor relation to rugby league remains unchanged.

Wolves supporters claim the club is a wonderful nursery for the area's local talent. However, compared to just about every Sydney based club, ethnic or otherwise, the Wolves record for talent development is poor.

The Wolves crowd figures (unaudited) compared to the old South Coast and Corrimal clubs are poor.

What makes them look even worse is that both South Coast and Corrimal played at a time when the total population of area was much less than now.

Despite the games long history in the Wollongong area the Wolves have done little to lift the games flagging fortunes.

Most of the large number of people in the area with an involvement in soccer do not much identify with the Wolves if at all. If they get the chop from the NSL they will not be missed by many.

R. Melor, Bondi, NSW.

I sincerely hope the Wolves are not axed. It would be a travesty if the Wolves were cut if teams like Auckland remain.

The Wolves have so much to offer Australian Soccer. Let's hope the establishment does not throw it all away. - Ed

Send letters to Australian and British Soccer Weekly
PO Box 155
Marrickville NSW 1475 or fax (02) 9550 9332
or e-mail to: soccerweekly@hotmail.com

2000 FIFA Club World Championship

The inaugural FIFA CLUB WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP will showcase eight of the world's best football teams and dozens of stars, all vying for a share in the \$US27.5 million total prizemoney.

SBS Television will be broadcasting all of South Melbourne's games LIVE TO ALL CENTRES, as well as the Final, which will all be held in Rio de Janeiro's Maracana Stadium.

South Melbourne will be the first Australian men's team since the 1974 World Cup to be involved at this senior level, and will be rewriting the history books of Australian soccer when homegrown stars such as Paul Trimboli, Goran Lozanovski and Olyroo Michael Curcija, take to the field wearing the famous blue and white.

South Melbourne have been drawn to come up against local Brazilian champions Vasco da Gama, CONCACAF Champions from Mexico Necaxa and football treble winners Manchester United.

This will be the only opportunity on Australian television — free-to-air or pay television — that sports fans will be able to witness history being made by Australian soccer.

Friday January 7
Vasco Da Gama v South Melbourne
(Eastern States 9.30am, South Australia 9.00am, Queensland 8.30am, Darwin 8.00am, Perth 6.30am)

Sunday January 9
South Melbourne v Necaxa
(Eastern States 9.30am, South Australia 9.00am, Queensland 8.30am, Darwin 8.00am, Perth 6.30am)

Wednesday January 12
Manchester United v South Melbourne
(Eastern States 7.00am, South Australia 6.30am, Queensland 6.00am, Darwin 6.30am, Perth 4.00am)

Saturday January 15
FINAL (teams TBA)
(Eastern States 8.30am, South Australia 8.00am, Queensland 7.30am, Darwin 7.00am, Perth 5.30am)

SOUTH'S RICHEST CHAPTER

Qualification for this prestigious tournament sees the South Melbourne Soccer Club enter the richest chapter in its proud history, one that sees the Club sitting on the brink of creating Australian Soccer history with a quest to win three consecutive national league titles.

South Melbourne's participation in the FIFA World Club Championship is the biggest and most lucrative tournament that any Australian soccer club has ever won the right to be involved in. Success in Brazil will instantaneously award South Melbourne a high level of recognition and respect worldwide as it represents Australian sport, not just soccer, on the international stage.

A representative of both Australia and the

entire Oceania region against world soccer superpowers, South Melbourne will be playing in front of an estimated television audience of up to one billion viewers and crowd attendances in excess of 120,000 in Rio de Janeiro's famous Maracana Stadium.

South Melbourne is vying for a share in the \$US27.5 million total prizemoney, beginning with a crack at Copa Libertadores winner Vasco da Gama which features Romario and Edmundo, two of the best Brazilian strikers going around today.

Its recent acquisition of first-choice Brazil national team stopper Junior Baiano adds strength to a tight defence, ensuring a tough battle at both ends of the field for the team rated as second favourite to win the tournament.

CARLTON SING THE BLUES

Carlton fan and Melbourne musician Michael Witheford has combined his passions to write a new song for Carlton.

"A Dream Won't Do" features an impressive line up of talent with members of local bands. The song is for Carlton fans, and has been played at Olympic Park over the past two games.

The CD is now available for purchase direct from the Club, and will be available from the merchandise stand at Olympic Park from December 28th for the game against the Newcastle Breakers.

The CD also includes two bonus tracks — "One of Your Bets" and "Bridgetta". A 40 second sample of the song can be heard at the Carlton Website, www.carltonsoccer.com.au



The CD Cover: A Dream Won't Do.

CAN YOU STUMP THE ABSW EDITOR?

See Page 21



Eastern Suburbs Soccer Football Association, Inc

WOMENS TRIALS

**State League Division 1
1st Grade and Under 19s
Heffron Park, Maroubra**

SUNDAY JANUARY 9

2-4pm

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 12

6-8pm

SUNDAY JANUARY 16

2-4pm

**FOR MORE INFO CALL
PETER ON 0413 422201**

FAWKNER JOIN FEEDER SYSTEM

The Carlton Soccer Club has announced that Fawkner Soccer Club has joined the innovative Carlton Feeder System.

Fawkner is one of Melbourne's strongest junior soccer clubs, and have a team competing in the Southern Division of the National Youth League.

The Carlton Feeder System is an innovative network of Junior Soccer Clubs who are directly associated with Carlton. As such, the Junior Club will have Carlton



players conduct clinics, attend presentation nights, while the Junior Coaches will benefit from the experience of Carlton's Senior Coaches. Each Junior Member of the Feeder Club receives a Junior Feeder Reward Membership to the Carlton Soccer Club.

Carlton are genuinely excited about Fawkner joining the Feeder System, and it is envisaged that potential Carlton stars will come from their Club.



RAKIC JOINS UNITED

By Graham Cooke

Sydney United have signed midfielder Andy Rakic from ACT Premier League club Canberra Deakin.

The youngster was offered a trial after being recommended by former local star Tony Pangallo. "Andy impressed United's coach, David Ratcliffe, and now has a contract," Pangallo said.

"I would not be surprised if he made his NSL debut before the end of the season.



"In many ways it's a great shame because another promising local player has been lost to the Canberra Cosmos."

Pangallo, who was himself knocking on the NSL door until a knee injury two years ago, said he had originally sought to interest Marconi in the left-sided midfielder.

"They liked the look of him but decided they had enough players on their books," he said.

Rakic is the younger brother of John, a former ACT Player of the Year and member of Monaro's 1999 premiership-winning side.

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NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

ROUND 13

(PLAYED TUESDAY DECEMBER 28)

ADELAIDE CITY AUCKLAND KINGZ

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0

Adelaide City Force reinforced their belated top six desire with this revenge result over league new chums the Football Kingz.

This second successive victory thrust the Force two places forward on the league ladder and presented them with a host of positives for their future prospects.

Damian Mori proved he is back among the leading net busters, while Man-Of-The-Match, Carl Veart, returned to the scintillating form which brought him fame with his initial English club Sheffield United.

A souring negative came with a first half head clash which rendered Alex Tobin as yet another "one-eyed" City supporter and forced the skipper off the field to be replaced by new Yugoslav import Atila Hornjik.

The 24-year-old looked the goods from the outset as he positioned himself perfectly in the stopper role, revealing two-footed prowess and exceptional heading ability.



Atila Hornjik: Adelaide City's new Yugoslavia recruit.

POY POINTS: 3 - C. Veart (AC), 2 - D. Mori (AC), 1 - C. Bunce (AK)

BRISBANE STRIKERS WOLLONGONG

1
1

Brisbane Strikers ended their three match losing streak and showed enough signs to still be a finals contender in a 1-1 draw with Wollongong Wolves.

Third placed Wollongong grabbed the early ascendancy against the run of play when striker Sasho Petrovski deceived his marker Shane Stefanutto near the half hour to head home a cross from Alvin Ceccoli.

The Strikers had five clear scoring chances in the opening period but had to wait until the 57th minute for a freakish equaliser from midfielder Jeromy Harris.

POY POINTS: 3 - Young, 2 - Bolton, 1 - Harris

CANBERRA COSMOS NORTHERN SPIRIT

1
3

Tony Perinich rose above the injury clouds which have obscured his National Soccer League career over the last 18 months, scoring twice in Northern Spirit's 3-1 win over Canberra Cosmos.

The striker's form was hailed by a relieved coach Graham Arnold.

The Spirit's other goal was tapped in by Matthew Bingley after some great lead up work by ex-Canberra player Shane Lyons. Earlier, the Cosmos had equalised through Jason Polak.

POY POINTS: 3 - Tony Perinich (NS), 2 - Luke Casserly (NS), 1 - Jason Polak (CC)

CARLTON NEWCASTLE BREAKERS

0
0

Carlton failed to break down the Newcastle defence, being forced to settle for a scoreless draw at Olympic Park.

The Blues dominated the match, especially in the second half, but were unable to hit the net against a well-organised Newcastle back line, led by outstanding Todd McManus.

The loss of two points enabled league leader Sydney Olympic to steal a four-point lead on the Blues to go into the next millennium as title favourites.

Carlton coach Stuart Munro was fuming about his forwards' inability to capitalise on their chances and after arguing with referee Mark Shields was told to vacate the bench with two minutes of play left.

Hero one week, villain the next, Carlton captain Andrew Marth shot over the bar after 67 minutes and wide six minutes later.

POY POINTS: 3 - McManus, 2 - Lapsansky, 1 - Slater

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS GIPPSLAND FALCONS

0
1

In the battle of the clubs threatened with NSL expulsion, Gippsland Falcons held on grimly to a first-half lead to beat home side Melbourne Knights 1-0 at Sunshine last Sunday.

It was an embarrassing loss for the Knights, who played poorly, and a deserved away win for the determined Falcons.

The Knights pressed for most of the second half, wanting to force an equaliser. But the Falcons defence, led by veteran Mehmet Durakovic, stood firm to the end against the attacking red shirts.

Brian MacNicol put the Falcons ahead with a cracking shot high into the net after 17 minutes.

POY POINTS: 3 - Fak, 2 - Durakovic, 1 - MacNicol

PARRAMATTA POWER SYDNEY OLYMPIC

1
2

Sydney Olympic survived a torrid last 15 minutes of bombardment at the Parramatta Stadium to ultimately run out 1-2 winners against a luckless Parramatta Power.

That enabled the League leaders to stretch their lead at the top by an extra two points.

Hugely marring the match was the fact that Olympic's 20-year-old rookie midfielder Peter Zorbas was sent off in the 73rd minute for simply celebrating scoring his goal which ultimately proved to be the

winner for Olympic and simultaneously ended up humiliating Zorbas as a reward.

In front of a record home crowd of 10,018, the Power drew first blood one minute from halftime when striker Jon Angelucci scored from a Jacob Burns cross.

A Pablo Cardozo cross 14 minutes after the break saw Olympic's striker Norman Tome equalise before Zorbas' 73rd minute goal gave the League leaders victory.

POY POINTS: 3 - Eagleton (Power), 2 - Cardozo (Olympic), 1 - Angelucci (Power)

PERTH GLORY MARCONI STALLIONS

1
0

Perth Glory maintained their impressive unbeaten record against Marconi Stallions with a hard-fought 1-0 triumph before a crowd of 13,153 at Perth Oval.

A moment of classic individualism from wing-back Rob Trajkovski, together with the killer instinct of midfielder Con Boutsianis, proved the difference in what was a tough yet even encounter that was not helped by the sweltering heat.

Marconi's Buddy Farah later collapsed from severe dehydration and had to be rushed to hospital.

POY POINTS: 3 - Con Boutsianis (PG), 2 - Rob Trajkovski (PG), 1 - Christian Care (SM)

SYDNEY UNITED SOUTH MELBOURNE

0
2

The form of South Melbourne on the eve of the World Club Championship in Brazil left a lot to be desired, although their 2-0 win away at Sydney United along with the return of playmaker Paul Trimboli will give the team renewed confidence days out from their opening match.

South Melbourne's performance against bottom of the table United was not that of world beaters. South's were totally outplayed and outthought in the first half and it took two moments of brilliance to get the champs over the line.

On the hour mark brilliant lead up work from Steve Iosifidis down the right side of the penalty box cut the United defence to shreds, his cut back finding an unmarked Michael Curcija who slotted home from on the six yard box.

And only seven minutes later the game was over in terms of a contest, a sublime flick by Trimboli sent striker Vaughan Coveny free on goal, his finish clinical, leaving United debutante keeper Steven Tolios with no chance.

POY POINTS: 3 - Iosifides (South Melbourne), 2 - Orlic (South Melbourne), 1 - Trimboli (South Melbourne)

ROUND 13 LINE UPS

SYDNEY UNITED SOUTH MELBOURNE

0
2

Venue: Sydney United Sports Centre. Crowd: 2,179. Referee: D Dwight Cautions: Genc (SU) 10, Maric (SU) 30.

Sydney United: Tolios, Kupresak (Jurilj 46), Bosnar, Savocca, Arrarte (Bozinovski 87), Pondeljak, Maric, Rastall, Ganc (Deak 79), Moric, Bosevski.

South Melbourne: Jones, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Orlic, Blatsis (Liparoti 46), Clarkson, Panopoulos, Coveny, Trimboli (Tsekinis 81), Curcija, Alagich (Goutzioulus 60)

BRISBANE STRIKERS WOLLONGONG WOLVES

1
1

Venue: Sydney United Sports Centre. Crowd: 2,179. Referee: D Dwight Cautions: Genc (SU) 10, Maric (SU) 30.

Sydney United: Tolios, Kupresak (Jurilj 46), Bosnar, Savocca, Arrarte (Bozinovski 87), Pondeljak, Maric, Rastall, Ganc (Deak 79), Moric, Bosevski.

South Melbourne: Jones, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Orlic, Blatsis (Liparoti 46), Clarkson, Panopoulos, Coveny, Trimboli (Tsekinis 81), Curcija, Alagich (Goutzioulus 60)

PERTH GLORY MARCONI STALLIONS

1
0

Venue: Perth Oval. Crowd: 13,153 Referee: B Hugo

Perth Glory: Petkovic, Trajkovski (Atkos 72), Miller, Naven, Harnwell, Junior, Halpin (edwards 35), Ergic, Wehrman, Despotovski, Boutsianis (Buljbasic 86).

Marconi Stallions: Turnbull, Gibson, Care, McDonald (Karl 64), Babic, Maloney (Savarino 87), Smith, Farah, Duric (Trajanovski 65), Renaud, Zoric.

CARLTON SC NEWCASTLE BREAKERS

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0

Venue: Olympic Park. Crowd: 3,098. Referee: M Shield

Carlton: Anastasiadis, Deans, Douglas, Marth, Slater (Markovski 74), Atkinson, Moreira (Thompson 59), Lapsansky, Conroy, Anthopoulos (Terminello 69), Packer.

Newcastle Breakers: Catlin, Pryce, Roberts, McManus, Sprod, Dodd (Trpceski 86), Wilson, Buonavoglia, Wieczorek (Smith 13), Harper, Moore.

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE AUCKLAND KINGZ

2
0

Venue: Hindmarsh Stadium. Crowd: 5604 Referee: Eddie Lennie

Adelaide City Force: Knezevic, Tobin (Hornjik 28), Talladira, Mori, Veart, Sabljak, Vidmar, Costanzo, Hassell (Brain 78), Pelosi, Kim.

Auckland Kingz: Batty, Perry, Bunce, Jones, Vicelich, Middleby (Silva 72), Osman, Ngata, Stergiopoulos (Jackson 46), de Jong, Ruffer.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS GIPPSLAND FALCONS

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1

Venue: Knights Stadium. Crowd: 3,661 Referee: B Precious Cautions: Susa (MK) 4, Cervinski (MK) 19, Reda (MK) 31, Durakovic (MF) 46, Fak (MF) 57, Banini (MK) 60, MacNicol (MF) 65, Vukadin (MK) 89.

Melbourne Knights: John, Banini (Vassallo 65), Kelic, Kiratzoglou, Urlovic, Abbas, Vukadin, Susa, Cervinski, Silic (Trupkovic), Reda (Magdic 46).

Gippsland Falcons: Jevdjovic, Fak, Gotis, Durakovic, MacNicol, Bell, Puca (Savage 42), Hutchinson, Kakos (Hastie), Marcina, Nilo.

CANBERRA COSMOS NORTHERN SPIRIT

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3

Venue: Bruce Stadium Crowd: 1,863 Referee: C Diomis

Canberra Cosmos: Konstantinof, Burt, Purdue (Popovich 80), Polak, Winnie, Watkins (Musitano 72), Hamilton, James (Gonzalez 68), Kolpak, Hoker, Roberts.

Northern Spirit: Perosh, Enes (Cunico 38), Bingley, Casserly, Slater (Syder 34), Perinich, Cranney, Lyons, Bilokapic, Crook, Sobczyk (Moss 74).

PARRAMATTA POWER SYDNEY OLYMPIC

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2

Venue: Parramatta Stadium. Crowd: 10,018. Referee: G. Connolly.

Parramatta Power: Crews: Barrett, Vrkic, Byrnes, Eagleton: Elrich (Griffiths 76), Bennett, Ardane (Berry 65), Burns: Angelucci, Sterjovski.

Sydney Olympic: Bouhoutsos: Baillie, Juric, Zoricich: Emerton, Phillips, Zorbas, N.Carle (Jomaa 46th, Sinozic 85th), Wilson: Cardozo, Tome (Kalandzisz 77).

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

MARCONI STALLIONS MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

By John Economos

Marconi's late substitute striker Harry Karl scored two sensational goals in the dying minutes of the game that enabled Marconi to swamp the Melbourne Knights 3-0 last Sunday night in a scrappy match at the Marconi Stadium.

Ironically the lanky blond striker was a former Melbourne Knights goalscorer that was imported from Croatia to the Victorian State League side St Albans. Karl last season was drafted into the Melbourne Knights' side where in seven games he scored five goals but was released by the Knights as unwanted.

Marconi's suave coach Eddie Krncevic, towards the end of the game desperately wanting fresh legs in his attack to finish off a defiant Melbourne Knights that wouldn't surrender despite trailing 1-0, replaced his industrious striker and 'Man Of The Match' Kris Trajanovski by bringing on the lanky blond and former Melbourne Knights' striker, Karl in the 85th minute.

Two minutes after coming on, and with his first possession of the ball, Karl scooted down the left touchline, veered into the Knights' box and let fly with his right boot an outstepped low drive that swerved just inside the far post to stretch Marconi's lead to 2-0 and virtually seal the match for the home side.

But three minutes into stoppage time Karl struck again, after his captain Brad Maloney had fed him well. Karl hungrily surged forward, cut infield around his marker to again blast an identical outstepped swerving right-footed drive, but this time from the right side, that flashed inside the far post.

After Karl had scored his first, exploding with uncontrollable excitement, he quickly wheeled around and galloped towards the

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halfway mark to celebrate his joy in front of his wife Jane who was holding their two and a half year old son Dani who was standing behind the fence.

Karl later stated to ABSW: "I can't describe my feelings scoring these two goals.

"I'm playing for a place in the first team and Marconi is such a great team with many class players. These two goals have done a lot of good for my confidence."

Until Karl's two late sensational goals, the match lacked colour and enterprise and Marconi should have finished the game in the first session instead of going in at the break leading just 1-0 through a goal by striker Kris Trajanovski. Maloney had pumped a high ball into the Knights' box where striker Alex Duric headed down for Trajanovski to easily knock into the target from just a metre.

Duric was denied a couple of goals himself through two powerful headers, the first in the first minute saved by Knights' goalkeeper Martin John, and the second on the half hour mark when he headed on target a Vlado Zoric corner from the right only to see midfielder Paul Magdic barely clear off the line.

Ten minutes from the break the Knights could in fact have drawn first blood as sweeper Ante Kovacevic drilled a low 25-metre free kick through the Marconi wall, but talented goalkeeper Michael Turnbull smothered the rocket on his goal-line.

A startling piece of selfish play in the 53rd minute by Marconi's diminutive central midfielder Christian Care, robbed his team of another goal. Central stopper Mike Smith rifled a long ball over the top



Harry Karl: Two goal performance against his old club

for Care to run onto and bust into the clear with just the Knights' goalkeeper to beat, but had his captain Maloney in support on his left. Care however selfishly elected to blast himself and went wide of the left upright when a square ball to Maloney was blatantly the correct option.

Marconi was best served by Trajanovski, the always reliable and steely central defender Mike Smith, striker Alex Duric, plus the wonderful finishing by late substitute Harry Karl. For the Knights, central midfielder Mark Silic was easily their best, supported by experienced sweeper Ante Kovacevic and striker Ivan Kelic.

Marconi's midfield of Darren McDonald, Care, Maloney and Zoric looked lopsided with the robust McDonald clearly unsuited on the right line that could have been put to better use in a more central position with the more mobile Care outside.

Marconi's coach Eddie Krncevic later stated to ABSW: "Harry Karl is a goalscorer and I believe that he will score a lot of goals for us, but we should have had the game finished by half time and I thought we really deserved to win. I was happy with the performance and 'Traja' (Kris Trajanovski) worked very hard, and I was also pleased with Harry Karl as his two goals will do his confidence a lot of good. "It was a good team performance and it was good to see Mark Babic back and doing well," ended Krncevic.

But the Knights' coach Vlado Vanis, was far from complimentary about some members of his team as he lashed out to ABSW with: "Players have to put in 100 percent and most of mine didn't. After our two good wins against Sydney Olympic and Wollongong I expected something much better. I have two or three players that are not good enough to play in the NSL. If I'm the coach next season with this Club, three or four of these players will not be with us," stressed Vanis.

The Knights' coach then went on about the game stating: "The first 15 minutes we were under great pressure from Marconi as they won five or six corners. "When we survived and started to play and tried to do something, they (Marconi) scored their first goal just before halftime which affected us," ended Vanis.

WOLLONGONG WOLVES PARRAMATTA POWER

By Daniel Giorlando

Fijian Esala Masi proved a point to all, especially coach Nick Theodorakopoulos as the out of favour striker hit back with a lethal hat-trick for the Wollongong Wolves to help sink the out of form Parramatta Power by 4-3 at Brandon Park.



Esala Masi: Hat-Trick hero.

Masi, who was only in the starting line up at the expense of the injured Stuart Young, completed his first ever hat-trick in the NSL within 57 minutes. The win cemented the Wolves spot on the ladder, their brand of attacking and adventurous play paying dividends nearing the half way mark of the season.

The Wolves breaking from defence spread the ball wide to Alvin Ceccoli on the left, his through ball from half way found Scott Chipperfield who had got around his marker to square the ball to Masi who tapped the ball in from close range after only three minutes.

But Ceccoli was to turn from hero to villain in the space of five minutes. His mistake leading to the Power's equaliser as Jacob Burns

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capitalised on a failed backpass by Ceccoli to convert low to the left-hand post to make it 1-1.

And after only 11 minutes this astonishing game was to take another turn as Masi made it two for the night after a bit of help from the Power defence.

An outswinging corner from Chipperfield found an unmarked David Cervinski on the back post who sent in a low header only to have it skied off the line by Nathan Eagleton. But the Power defence was ball watching and allowed Masi to rise above the pack and head home.

The Wolves are the fastest starters in the league, scoring eight goals in the first 15 minutes of all their matches this season and Masi should have had his hat-trick just on the quarter hour.

Masi, unlike his other opportunities, rushed his shot after being sent through by David Huxley. Masi blasted wide of the left post when really he should have scored what would have been one of the fastest ever hat-tricks in the league.

The Power defence had problems containing Masi all night which freed up teammates David Huxley, who was playing his 50th game and captain Matt Horsely who both ran riot through midfield, helping create chance after chance.

But for all the uncertainty in the Power defence, they did level up the scores in the 17th minute, and this time it was the Wolves defence which failed to clear a corner. Keeper Pogliacomi parrying the ball straight up in the air and Joeys' captain Mark Byrnes climbed above the pack to head home his first NSL goal.

Parramatta coach David Mitchell would have been pleased to go into the break on level terms but his delight turned into frustration 10 minutes after the break as the Wolves for the third time on the night

went ahead.

Once again it was the creativity of the bandaged up Horsely, looking more like a wounded soldier, who sent in a floating chip over the top of the defence for Chipperfield who at full stretch got his head to the ball to lob it over Parramatta keeper Andrew Crews.

And only two minutes later the man of the night, Esala Masi was given a late Christmas present by the Power defence as he notched up his third, their failure to clear a long throw allowing strike partner Sasho Petrovski to send a shot cannoning off the right post rebounding into the path of Masi.

The need for fresh legs on the park was evident, and it was a master stroke when Parramatta coach Mitchell brought on John Gibson who was on the park for less than 10 seconds before helping his side get back into the match.

After taking a quick corner, the ball fell to Gibson who sent in a wicked cross which eluded everybody as well as keeper Leslie Pogliacomi who could only tap the ball to the feet of Mile Sterjovski who tapped home from almost on the goal line.

The Wollongong Wolves for all their dominance were lucky to get away with all three points, Pogliacomi pulling off a sublime save from a thunderbolt free kick from Peter Bennett, his 30-foot drive headed for the back of net only for the keeper to parry the ball around the right post.

Parramatta Power were unlucky to come away from Brandon Park empty handed but the sorry fact for the Power is that this has been the story all too often from the league's new boys.

Coach Mitchell's decision not to select himself may be one which may only last a week.

NORTHERN SPIRIT BRISBANE STRIKERS

By Vince Battiato

The promise of a first-up win for the new millennium and two in a row was a far cry from North Sydney oval last Sunday night as the only celebrations came from the visitors dressing room.

Northern Spirit had come off an impressive 3-1 win at Canberra a few days earlier and an air of a season turn-around was looming.

Coach Graham Arnold should have smelt the foul air prior to kick off when Abbas Saad broke down during the pre-game warm up feeling a twinge on the groin strain he picked up against Adelaide City two weeks ago.

Arnold had to pluck youngster Ryan Griffiths from the crowd, who'd come to see his team-mates as a spectator, to make up the numbers on the bench.

The Spirit started like the wind and they should have gone ahead within 90 seconds.

A pinpoint pass by Robbie Slater releasing David Seal down the right. Seal's low cross was met first time by Tony Perinich who should have done better, his miscued shot straight into the arms of Clint Bolton.

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Spirit kept up the pressure early down the right side, Slater and company causing plenty of problems for Brisbane's left-sided pairing of Shane Stefanutto and Jeremy Harris.

It was in the 18th minute that Strikers' skipper Stuart McLaren lept high to get his head to a Nick Meredith corner. Virtually unchallenged, Brisbane went one up against the run of play.

Spirit have scored only once all season in the first 30 minutes of a match and they almost doubled that statistic in the 27th minute when a neat one-two between youngster Shane Lyons and Paul Bilokapic saw Bilokapic's cross held by Bolton. It was Spirit's best scoring opportunity of the half.

Ironically, less than a minute later the Strikers sealed the match with a second goal.

In what appeared to be a blatant offside, Brisbane defender Andrew Davidson flicked on a looping header over the Spirit defence. Much to their dismay, Peter Grierson slotted the ball unchallenged past keeper John Perosh to make it 2-0.

Lyons and ex-England international Ian Crook, who was playing his second match out of retirement, were quick to voice their disgust at the incident.

But Crook's and the Spirit's night would only get worse. He hobbled off the park just two minutes before the break with a left calf strain which will keep him out of action for five to six weeks.

Understandably Spirit coach Graham Arnold was disappointed with his side's display:

"We get carried away with one good win and the next week we are very ordinary.

"I'm starting to sound like a broken down record.

"There is just a total lack of discipline. Players just aren't doing their jobs," he ended.

The second half fizzled away as a contest. The Strikers had done the hard yards in the first session and the Spirit, who never stopped trying, just couldn't get the ball to bounce their way.

Brisbane boss John Kosmina was happy with the result but was empathetic to the problems facing his counterpart Graham Arnold.

"You cant coach passion," he began, "unless you're prepared to work, get stuck in, then forget it.

"I'm happy with the win but we've got a long way to go yet."

Northern Spirit paid the price for a lack of communication on the pitch and apart from the opening 10 minutes only really looked dangerous when promising youngsters Griffiths and Adam Snyder were on the park together late in the match.

A host of good performances for Brisbane. Only a handful for the Spirit. I guess numbers make the difference in a team game.



Graham Arnold: "Players just aren't doing their jobs".

TURN TO PAGE 32 FOR MATCH STATISTICS

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

GIPPSLAND FALCONS ADELAIDE CITY FORCE

By Damien Tripodi

The Gippsland Falcons showed character and determination to come from behind and salvage a draw in their round 14 encounter against Adelaide City Force in a game which appeared to be sealed for the visitors by the end of the first half.



Zoran Matic: Not happy

It took the second half performance by the Falcons to show newly found confidence and belief in themselves to turn around what began as a likely drubbing into a creditable performance and great finish. Adelaide was clearly more organised, the players were first to the ball and from the outset took control of the midfield by holding the ball and creating loose men on the flanks.

1 The Falcons didn't show the cohesion and fighting spirit of recent encounters. They were constantly being closed in with little chance of escape. The Adelaide trio of Sabljak, Pelosi and Costanzo proved to be thorns in the side of the Falcons.

1 Danger loomed for the Falcons in the seventh minute, as its defence, as its defence was left wide open when Sabljak's tight angled shot went across the goalmouth and scraped the far post on its way out.

The visitors took the lead in the 15th minute. From a free kick on the right hand side Bradley Hassell directed the ball to an unmarked Costanzo who set up Pelosi who hit the net with a header from just outside the six-yard box.

Ten minutes later Gippsland were celebrating prematurely as Brian MacNicol's long-range strike was ruled controversially offside.

The rest of the first half was one way traffic with Adelaide unlucky not to go into the break with more than a one goal lead.

Gippsland came out a new side in the second half and their enthusiasm payed dividends almost immediately. It took just four minutes for them to equalise.

Gippsland's Juan Nilo was fouled in the box by Dong Ki Kim. However, referee Brett Hugo deemed the foul outside the area.

Doug Marcina and Andy Vargas combined to set up local lad John Hutchinson who let fly with a low left-footed rocket which beat the City keeper.

The game opened up with both sides looking for a winner and it was

the home side who were lucky to escape a late Adelaide onslaught.

In the last minute, Pelosi was unlucky not to snatch the points, his shot from a goalmouth scramble hitting the upright and rebounding safely into the hands of Falcons' keeper Bojo Jevdjovic.

Gippsland coach Jeff Hopkins was happy with his team's second half display: "We had a chat at half time and I made the boys aware of what has got us results over the past few months."

"Thankfully they responded well and came out showing the form that has been evident during the season."

Adelaide coach Zoran Matic was not happy: "This (dropping points) has happened too many times this year."



John Hutchinson: scored Gippsland goal

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS SYDNEY UNITED

By Greg Danvers

The Newcastle Breakers extended their unbeaten run to seven matches when they beat Sydney United 1-0 at Breakers Stadium on Sunday.

With well over 500 fans still queued at the gate the Breakers went to the front in the second minute after Glenn Moore netted his first NSL goal from close range.

Glenn Sprod sent in a curling corner that the United defence took several attempts to clear with the ball falling to the feet of Moore for an easy tap into the net.

A crowd of 6816 then witnessed a very scrappy match that was marred by an astonishing refereeing decision by David Dwight.

Sydney United's Joe Moric clearly kicked and then kneed Breakers' midfielder Vasko Trpceviski in the head whilst on the ground. When the dust settled it was Trpceviski who was shown the yellow card.

Both the Breakers and United had chances before half-time with 'keepers Bob Catlin and Steve Tolios earning their match payments.

Tolios and Andy Harper collided in the 37th minute with Harper earning a yellow card. Tolios received attention but was able to

1 continue and from there looked solid.

0 Eddie Bosnar was United's best and produced several long-range shots that worried Catlin in an otherwise lacklustre performance from the visitors.

John Buonavoglia was denied by the post twice in the dying minutes of the match.

On the 90 minute mark Sprod found Mark Wilson with the cross falling to Buonavoglia. His shot hit the far post and rebounded to Shane Pryce but all Pryce could do was stab the ball over the bar.

A minute later Damien Smith pushed the ball to Buonavoglia and again the ball hit the post.

Breakers coach Lee Sterrey was happy to take the points but felt his side was flat and will need to lift when they meet competition front-runners Sydney



Eddy Bosnar: Best in a losing side

Olympic on Friday.

"We were terrible in intensity and thank god for the first minute of play," Sterrey said after the match.

"It was a very, very ordinary performance. At the end of the day maybe it's a sign of a bit of luck going our way."

"Talking to a few of the boys they felt flat, no real reason - maybe the heavy pitch at Carlton."

For Sydney United coach David Ratcliffe a very frustrating night with several players out injured, no shirts for his substitutes and an opposition that gives nothing away to contend with.

"I had a couple out (players) there that I wouldn't feed if it was my decision," Ratcliffe said.

"Trying to get 11 decent players with nothing is difficult, trying to get 11 decent players with money is difficult but we have got some kids there that are doing well."

"I thought (Eddie) Bosnar did well today. He showed he's got pace, (John) Buonavoglia is quick but Eddie is a little bit quicker than him. Fortunately for him but unfortunately for us he goes with the Olympic Games squad and misses next week's game which again doesn't make it any easier."

"You will have to ask the committee about that (no shirts for the substitutes)," was Ratcliffe's reply to the frustration in the camp.

When Ante Deak replaced Nick Bosevski in the 72nd minute Deak was forced to wear Bosevski's shirt turned inside-out. Amateur stuff for mine!

ABSW PLAYER OF THE YEAR

ROUND 14

Gippsland v Adelaide

3- Pelosi (ACF)
2- Sabljak (ACF)
1- Nilo (GF)

Marconi v Knights

3- Trajanovski (MS)
2- Smith (MS)
1- Silic (MK)

Wollongong v Parramatta

3- Masi (WW)
2- Huxley (WW)
1- Pogliacomi (WW)

Northern Spirit v Brisbane

3- Meredith (BS)
2- Grierson (BS)
1- Snyder (NS)

Newcastle v Sydney United

3- Moore (NB)
2- Bosnar (SU)
1- Harper (NB)



PROGRESSIVE POINTS

AFTER ROUND 13

Andy Harper	(Newcastle Breakers)	16
Pablo Cardozo	(Sydney Olympic)	15
Andrew Crews	(Parramatta Power)	14
Mehmed Durakovic	(Gippsland Falcons)	13
Michael Curcija	(South Melbourne)	12
David Cervinski	(Wollongong Wolves)	12
Con Boutsianis	(Perth Glory)	11
Angelo Costanzo	(Adelaide City Force)	10
Lubo Lapsansky	(Carlton SC)	10
John Buonavoglia	(Newcastle Breakers)	10
Ivan Kelic	(Melbourne Knights)	9
Gabriel Mendez	(Sydney Olympic)	9
Robbie Stanton	(Wollongong Wolves)	9

TURN TO PAGE 32 FOR MATCH STATISTICS

NSW SUPER LEAGUE

Season Preview 1999/2000

By Vince Battiato

The revamped NSW Super League kicks off this weekend with three brand new teams on the road to state glory for the first season of the new millennium.

The NSW Soccer Federation decided to increase the number of teams from 12 to 14 for this season, promoting three new sides with the sole team facing the chop.

The unfortunate side to make way was Ryde City.

Minor premiers Manly-Warringah, coached by extrovert Tony Pezzano have joined the top flight even withstanding their grand final loss last season.

Grand final winners Penrith have also gained promotion for the first time.

The third side to join the Super League are none other than St. George, one time NSL champions now forging their way back up the divisions.

All three sides will find the going tough in the Super League and some of the youngsters who weren't up to scratch in Division One will surely be tested by the older heads in Super League.

ROUND ONE

FAIRFIELD BULLS vs CENTRAL COAST

These two sides finished last season with the two best individual performances of the season.

Peter Preston of Central Coast won the Super League gold medal after a close battle with Matthew Borg who finished second.

Both sides will be looking for greater team performances this season, but the difference could well be Borg, who also finished joint top scorer.

SUTHERLAND SHARKS vs LEICHHARDT TIGERS

Sutherland had another poor season last year and I'm sure coach John Lavin would like to see his side in the top half of the table for a change.

Leichhardt have spent no money in the off-season and have recruited a heap of young, unknown talent as well as a new passionate coach in Les DeCelis. The promo-



Les De Celis: New Leichhardt Tigers coach passionate for victory

tion of Steve Karavatakis to Captain is an inspiring move and he will serve the Tigers admirably.

If their season is half as spectacular as their season launch they'll still make the finals.



John Turner (Pictured with his wife Lesle): Bonnyrigg coach last year's coach of the year.

ST. GEORGE vs BONNYRIGG

New boys St. George probably face the toughest assignment of Round One. But I guess if you're going to mix it up with the big boys, you may as well go for the biggest one first.

It's good to see the Saints back in the top league but it will be a big ask for coach John Sentas to steer them into finals contention.

Bonnyrigg, with last season's coach of the year John Turner, look strong as ever and will be right up there come finals time. They'll kick off their season with a win and who knows maybe this year they'll actually win a grand final.

PENRITH PANTHERS vs MACARTHUR RAMS

Somewhat of a local derby, the Macarthur boys will have too much experience for the new side, who did amazingly well to win the Division One grand final last season through a series of sudden death matches.

Macarthur, coached by Brian Dene, will be strong once again and should have little trouble accounting for Penrith in this Round One fixture.

It remains to be seen whether this club can take the step up from making the finals, which they do with regularity, to actually being a potential champion.

MANLY-WARRINGAH vs CANTERBURY MARRICKVILLE

Manly will probably find the going tough this season, but this young side will be fully enthused at the season's start.

I can smell a win for the new boys but they'll more than likely fall away as the season wears on.

John Xipolitis is an institution at Canterbury Marrickville and he takes the reins for yet another season. It's difficult



Peter Preston: Last year's Gold medal winner

seeing them causing a threat to the race for the title, but they'll certainly cause some headaches.

BANKSTOWN vs PARRAMATTA EAGLES

Bankstown always seem to do well and have ex-winning coach Lube Jancev on board to try and relive some old glory. Jancev is a master at getting the best out of his players, but I don't think it will happen this season.

Parramatta will be the team to beat this season. Grant Bard top scored last season together with Borg of Fairfield Bulls and he will be menacing as ever

again this season.

They were soundly beaten in last year's grand final by Blacktown and they'll be itching to erase that from recent memory with a championship victory this season.

EASTS vs BLACKTOWN

Easts will be hard pressed this season to find a winning formula but this innovative club with new coach John Calleja will cause some waves. No finals spot but competitive.

Blacktown are solid as usual. Coach Brian Brown will be primed to make it back to back titles and it seems he just might have the squad to do it. A win first up and plenty more to follow throughout the season.

As the first season of the new millennium kicks off and the talk of the possibility of a national second division looming, most of the Super League clubs could be fighting for more than just the Super League crown. There could be an added prize come the end of the season.



Grant Bard: Joint top scorer last season

Auburn United Soccer Club



2000 Season Trials

State League Division One
1st Grade, U/21s, U/18s

Date 11th and 13th January 2000

at Mona Park
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AUBURN

Time: 6.00pm

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NSW SOCCER FEDERATION

Super League

Wednesday 5 January

Manly Warringah v Canterbury Marrickville, Cromer Park
18s only — 6.00pm

Friday 7 January

Bankstown v Parramatta, Jensen Park
18s only — 6.30pm

Saturday 8 January

Kick-off times:

7.00pm (1st grade); 5.00pm (21s); 3.00pm (18s)

Sutherland v Leichhardt, Seymour Shaw Park

St George v Bonnyrigg, St George Stadium

Penrith v Macarthur, Andrews Road Field

Manly Warringah v Canterbury Marrickville, Cromer Park

Sunday 9 January

Kick-off times:

7.00pm (1st grade); 5.00pm (21s); 3.00pm (18s)

Fairfield v Central Coast, Nineveh Field

Eastern Suburbs v Blacktown, David Phillips Field

Kick-off times:

6.00pm (1st grade); 4.00pm (21s)

Bankstown v Parramatta, Jensen Park

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National Youth League

NORTHERN DIVISION (ROUND 13)

WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 1999

N.S.W.I.S. 1 .. Newcastle Breakers Colts 2
(Holman 31) (Haynes 3, Blanning 88)

Marconi Stallions Colts 2 .. Sydney Olympic Academy 3
(Sandoval 9, Peros 75) (Jomaa 47, 69, Carle 57)

Sydney United 1 .. Marconi Stallions 0
(Lo Proto 80)

TUESDAY 28 DECEMBER 1999

Wollongong Wolves Colts ..0 .. N.S.W.I.S. 1
(own goal 35)

Marconi Stallions Colts 0 .. Newcastle Breakers 2
(Angievski 6, Gazzard 30)

Q.A.S. 6 .. Wollongong Wolves 2
(M Davidson 32, Walsh 45, 51, 63, (Ashley 34, Lucas 78)
Drake 73, Miner 88)

A.C.T.A.S. 2 .. Northern Spirit 2
(D Aliffi 7, Veljanovski 82) (Catanzaro 23, R Griffiths 39)

Parramatta Power 0 .. Sydney Olympic 1
(Doumanis 1)

Northern Spirit Colts 0 .. Sydney United Colts 0

Bye - Marconi Stallions

	P	W	D	B	L	F	A	Pts
A.I.S.	13	9	2	1	2	51	14	29
Parramatta Power	12	9	2	1	1	32	7	29
Sydney Olympic	11	8	3	1	0	30	7	27
Q.A.S.	13	8	1	1	4	37	20	25
Newcastle Breakers	13	7	1	0	5	26	16	22
Northern Spirit	11	6	2	1	3	24	16	20
Marconi Stallions	11	6	0	1	5	16	19	18
N.S.W.I.S.	12	5	2	1	5	20	12	17
Sydney United	9	5	1	1	3	18	17	16
A.C.T.A.S.	12	4	4	1	4	20	26	16
Sydney Olympic Academy	12	5	0	1	7	29	44	15
Newcastle Breakers Colts	14	4	1	0	9	18	30	13
Northern Spirit Colts	10	3	2	1	5	12	25	11
Wollongong Wolves	11	3	1	1	7	12	23	10
Marconi Stallions Colts	12	2	3	1	7	18	30	9
Sydney United Colts	14	2	2	0	10	13	36	8
Wollongong Wolves Colts	10	0	1	1	9	6	40	1

Three mid-week matches were played on Wednesday 22 December in order to reduce the number of postponed matches that have marred the first three months of the National Youth League Northern Division.

The N.S.W.I.S. hosted the Newcastle Breakers Colts in a fixture brought forward from Round 16. The Institute had hoped

to cement its place in the top half of the table but the visitors had other ideas. The Breakers opened the scoring after just three minutes through Peter Haynes. Brett Holman equalised for the hosts in the 31st minute.

The second half was closely fought and it was not until two minutes from time that another goal was scored. Andrew Blanning was the hero for the Novocastrians after netting the winner.

The Sydney Olympic Academy was involved in a five-goal thriller for the second time in three days but this time the Olympians were victorious by 3-2. The Marconi Stallions Colts were the unfortunate party.

The Stallions were a goal up after nine minutes when Rod Sandoval struck against his former teammates. The teams went into the break at 1-0 but a frantic half an hour period saw four goals scored.

Hussein Jomaa levelled the scores in the 49th minute before Nick Carle added a second for Olympic after 57 minutes. Four minutes later Jomaa found the net again to secure his double but any thought of a comfortable win was short lived as John Peros scored for the Stallions in the 75th minute. The final 15 minutes could not produce a goal and the Olympians held on for their fifth win of the season.

The steadily improving Sydney United recorded a 1-0 victory over the Marconi Stallions at the Sydney United Sports Centre. Allan Lo Proto scored for the third match in succession to take his season tally to eight. His strike in the 80th minute was enough to sink the Stallions.

Round 13 began with the N.S.W.I.S. registering a 1-0 victory over the Wollongong Wolves Colts. Dimitri Zakilas unfortunately scored an own goal to hand the Institute the three points. The performance was a marked improvement for the Wolves who have found life in the Youth League a little difficult.

The Newcastle Breakers defeated the Marconi Stallions Colts by 2-0. Robert Angievski scored after only six minutes to put the Newcastle Breakers on track for yet another comfortable win. Chris Gazzard doubled the Breakers lead after 30 minutes to ensure the visitors travelled back from Marconi Stadium with maximum points.

In a high scoring encounter at the Suncorp Metway Stadium the Q.A.S. demolished an out of sorts Wollongong Wolves outfit. The 6-2 scoreline included a hat-trick to Sean Walsh.

Walsh found the net in the 45th, 51st and 63rd minutes. Singles to Mark Davidson in the 32nd minute, Lawrence Drake after 73 minutes and finally Russell Miner two minutes from full-time ended the scoring for the hosts. The Wolves replied through Justin Ashley in the 34th minute and Jay Lucas after 78 minutes.

A 2-2 draw was played out between the A.C.T.A.S. and the Northern Spirit at Bruce Stadium. Daniel Aliffi netted for the home side after seven minutes but the Spirit fought back and scored twice before the break to take a 2-1 lead into half-time. Simon Catanzaro in the 23rd minute and Ryan Griffiths in the 39th minute were the scorers. However, the boys from Canberra refused to give up and their efforts were rewarded when Goran Veljanovski equalised in the 82nd minute to grab a point.

The battle between the only unbeaten sides in the competition was fought out at Parramatta Stadium between the Parramatta Power and Sydney Olympic. The result was settled within the first minute when Barney Smith in the Power goal fumbled an Anthony Doumanis strike. The match was evenly fought but in the end the superior technical ability of Olympic was too much for the Power to handle.

In an interesting sideline, it has been brought to my attention that Sydney Olympic have not been beaten, with the exception of a penalty shoot-out defeat in last season's Divisional Grand Final, since the 14 December 1998. This run stretches an amazing 31 matches and under the guidance of "super coach" Peter Papanikitas, who knows when it will end. Any team would be proud to boast such a record.

A scoreless draw at Christie Park ended an eventful Round 13. The Northern Spirit Colts and the Sydney United Colts could not manage a goal in the tough conditions.

Finally, the Sydney United and Newcastle Breakers fixture was postponed due to the state of the pitch at the Sydney United Sports Centre. This match will be rescheduled at a later date.

ROUND 14

SUNDAY 2 JANUARY 2000

Wollongong Wolves v Parramatta Power (Brandon Park - 4.00pm)

Newcastle Breakers v Sydney United (Breakers Stadium - 4.00pm)

Northern Spirit v Q.A.S. (Christie Park - 4.30pm)

Northern Spirit Colts v A.C.T.A.S. (Christie Park - 6.30pm)

N.S.W.I.S. v Marconi Stallions Colts (Valentine Park - 7.00pm)

Marconi Stallions v Sydney Olympic Academy
(Marconi Stadium - 8.15pm)

MONDAY 3 JANUARY 2000

Sydney Olympic v Wollongong Wolves

(Belmore Sports Ground - 4.00pm)

Northern Spirit Colts v QAS [Rd 33]

(Christie Park - 4.00pm)

Bye - Newcastle Breakers Colts

LEADING SCORERS

Elias Demourtzidis	A.I.S.	11
Russell Miner	Q.A.S.	10
Allan Lo Proto	Sydney United Youth	8
Grant Last	A.I.S.	7
Damian Pisano	Sydney Olympic	7
Franco Parisi	Sydney Olympic Academy	7

Matches played Sunday January 2 and Monday January 3 were played after ABSW went to press. Results published in next week's ABSW.

SOUTHERN DIVISION

LEADING SCORERS

Anthony Pelikan	Melbourne Knights	10
Andrew Mashoian	South Melbourne	9
Ace Stojcevski	Carlton	7
David Martin	Albury Wodonga	7
Angelo Motsiopoulos	Carlton	6
Deniz Ekici	Carlton	6
Naum Sekulovski	VIS	6
Xhezair Sulemani	Bulleen Inter	5
Josip Loncaric	VIS	5
Mark Tsiorlas	VIS	5

NEXT ROUND

WEDNESDAY 12 JANUARY 2000

Fawkner Blues v South Melbourne
(CB Smith Reserve, 6.30pm)

SATURDAY 15 JANUARY 2000

Gippsland Falcons v Preston Lions
(Falcons Stadium, 4pm)

VIS v South Dandenong
(Grange Reserve, 4pm)

SUNDAY 16 JANUARY 2000

Melbourne Knights v Melbourne Knights Academy
(Knights Stadium, 3.30pm)

Bulleen Inter v Carlton
(Mahoneys Reserve, 4pm)

Albury Wodonga v Bye

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THE 1997/1998

JUNIOR SOCCER

SHANE STRIKES FOR STARDOM

By Sharon Jackson

Shane Stefanutto is a young man totally focused on where he's going: to the top. An attractive young man, he has been playing national league soccer for almost a year.

"It's dreamlike," he said when asked how it felt to be playing in the NSL at 19:

"I'll never forget my first match: 28th December 1998, we were playing against South Melbourne and I was Man Of the Match. We lost 1-0 but still."

Like all successful sportsmen, the will to win is very much in evidence and as he says:

"If you don't have it, you won't get it."

He is concentrating on becoming a force within Australian Soccer and still feels very privileged to be there.

"Most of my mates are at uni or doing apprenticeships and here I am, getting paid to play soccer. And at this level."

Still, it's not all fun and games. In addition to the training and matches, a Strikers' traineeship involves at least 15 hours per week working for the club and his time is spent getting out to schools promoting himself and soccer to the local kids "networking is the key," he says.

"You go and talk to them and next week at the game, they recognize you and think 'hey, you were at our school'. It's good PR for me and the Strikers."

Asked if he thought the reason for poor gate attendances was due to the domination of other sports:

"Maybe but also I think the reason is that people like to see winners. For the 1996/7 Grand Final, the strikers packed the stadium with 40,000 fans. Last season, the Broncos started with a huge following but they lost the first eight games and the fans began dropping off too. Fickle isn't it but there it is."

What inspires him is the following soccer has worldwide and the ability of players like Leonardo of AC Milan and home grown Harry Kewell. "I would think I was doing well if I could play half as well as them."

At home, his heroes are Paul Trimboli, Brad Maloney and his Dad.

"It's all his fault really," he says with a grin. "He took me to a soccer sign-on day when I was about seven and it's a family argument as to who was hooked first, me or him."

His father coached him from the age of seven, reaping the benefits of their hard work and dedication to play in a



Shane Stefanutto: Making the grade at Brisbane.

Queensland state side at 12.

At high school, he kept up the training and was rewarded with a Q.A.S place at 16. "It was really hard going at that point."

"I was developing at a slower rate than most of the players around me and so I was overlooked by a lot of coaches. It's something I think coaches should be a bit more aware of."

He spent three years with the Q.A.S, two of these as Youth team Captain. Then the highlight of his career so far, the coveted traineeship with the Brisbane Strikers. Coming up next is the Olympics which he hopes will really put soccer on the map in Australia.

"We've had a few set backs with the Brazil game and the All-stars match not really raising the profile to what was expected but you have to balance that against the great performance by the Joeys and the Olympics staging the soccer here in Brisbane, I think will be just be brilliant."

Would he like to play overseas himself? "Of course, I would. Imagine playing for someone like Juventus or Milan. But if not, well you can't go past playing national league in Australia. I think they (FIFA) should relax the rules a bit for playing international games for your country. It must be the best thing to play for your country and we don't get to see enough of our overseas players because of their club commitments."

Asked what he likes to do to relax? "I like to catch up with my mates and have a hit with the golf club but more often, I'm at home watching SBS or any soccer that's on."

Predictably, when match day comes around, he spends most of his time getting in to 'matchmode'. Watching soccer videos, thinking about where he's playing, what his job is and who are his opponents. Then in the afternoon, the team gets together for tea and toast at Benton's in the inner city north to really get in to the match winning mind set.

"Believe in yourself and work hard to make your belief in to reality," he says as advice to any youngster coming through the ranks at the moment.

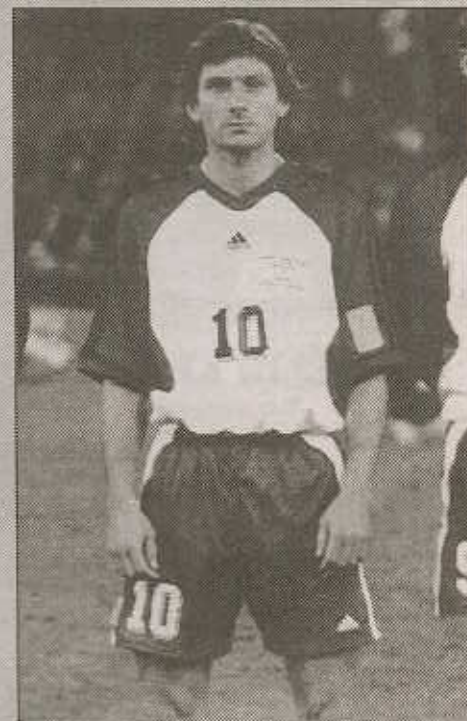
Well, good luck Steffie.

PROFILE

Nickname: Steffie
D.O.B: 12.1.80
Occupation: Traineeship with Brisbane Strikers
Position: Left Back
Previous Clubs: QAS Youth Team
Foot: Left footed
Eyes: Dark Brown eyes
Hair: Dark Brown Hair
Height: 175cm
Weight: 73kgs
Positions played: striker, midfielder, now left back
Stats: playing NSL soccer for one year
2nd season with strikers
QAS 3 years
seven
Age started playing soccer: seven

ACHIEVEMENTS

Career Highlight to date: Man of the Match in Strikers debut
Biggest achievement: Playing national soccer
Ambition: To play for Australia



Leonardo: Favourite player.

PERSONALITY

Favourite band: Pearl Jam
5 CD's unlivable without: Live on two legs — Pearl Jam
Trainspotting
Wild Vol 8
Best of 2 Pac
Bob Dylan's greatest hits
Favourite comedian: Billy Connolly
Favourite niteclub: Shooters on the Gold Coast
Hotel La's in Brisbane
Favourite Food: Seafood
Favourite TV show: Blue Heelers
Favourite TV Character: Tasmanian Devil
Favourite Food: Lots of oysters and not much else.

THE PEERS

Favourite o/s player: Leonardo
Favourite o/s team: AC Milan
Defender: Sol Campbell
Goalkeeper: Mark Bosnich
Hardest opponent: Brett Emerton
Dream choice of world league: Italian Serie A
Biggest influence: My Dad

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FAMOUS PHOTOS



Christina Italiano and Ashley Cork pictured with two of their favourite Marconi players, Sean and Mark Babic.

Kane Wright of Plumpton was Marconi's junior Stallion of the day for the match against South Melbourne on 31/10/99. He is pictured with his favourite player and Marconi skipper Brad Maloney.

STUMP THE EDITOR

QUESTION from:

David Kerridge
Morningside, VIC

What were the founding colours of Juventus?

As a Juventus supporter I can tell you that Juventus didn't always have the famous black and white stripes. Their original colour, would you believe, was PINK.

QUESTION from:

Tom Olic
Edensor Park, NSW

Which player currently at Leeds United was transferred from Blackburn for \$1.5m?

Tom, a little bit ambiguous because you haven't specified a date or even whether the amount was pounds or dollars. Nonetheless, I'm fairly certain that the player is Jason Wilcox.

QUESTION from:

Ali Al-Samail
Auburn, NSW

Have New Zealand ever reached the World Cup Finals?

Ali, New Zealand reached the World Cup Finals in 1982 in Spain. They did not go past the first round.

QUESTION from:

John Leventis
Northcote, VIC

In 1961 Brazilian side Santos, which included Pele, played a series of matches across Europe. As expected they won all their matches except one. They lost 2-1. Who beat them?

******STUMPED******

John, you got me. I searched long and hard, but to no avail. You are a WINNER and a video of your choice is available to you. For the ABSW readers, Santos was beaten by Olympiakos of Greece on 4/7/61. Ironically, the match was played at the home ground of arch-rival Panathinaikos. For the record - Pele did not score Santos' goal.

THIS WEEKS

SCOREBOARD



EDITOR 3
ABSW READERS 1

THE RULES

Questions will be answered within two editions of ABSW due to print deadlines. If they are not answered within two editions then I am stumped.

Due to fairness and lack of space please limit your suggestions to ONE question per reader per edition.

Important

Please make all questions as clear as possible. Ambiguous or deliberately misleading questions will not be tolerated.

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SOCCER WOMAN

By Janene Mar

SELECTION HEADACHE FOR MATILDAS

Fierce competition for places in the Matildas Team presented National Coach Chris Tanzey with some difficult decisions in selecting the 18-member team announced last Thursday for the upcoming Australia Cup.

Players recently returning from commitments in the USA plus others now recovered from injury has put added pressure on the remainder of the AIS-based Squad.

"It's a credit to the girls that it was certainly not easy to pick this 18," said Tanzey. "It's proof of the way they're training. The ones not selected, Joanne Butland, Amy Taylor and Alicia Ferguson in particular, this is quite hard on them because they have all done very well."

Tanzev is happy with the side's progress on the training field since the October Tour to China. "You can only take one step at a time, and we have moved on again in a few different areas. I said when I started we would need every single training day leading up to the

Olympics. We're one step along that path since China."

The four-nation Australia Cup comprising Australia, USA, Sweden, and Czech Republic kicks off a busy Olympic year and is the Matildas' first competition at home since the inaugural Australia Cup exactly a year ago. The Matildas lifted that title, defeating Italy in the final for the first time ever.

The fact that the USA will be without its World Cup champion players will make little difference to the Matildas, according to Tanzey. Pleased with the progress of the team, he is keen to once again witness the Matildas in international play.

"It will be very difficult whatever American team they put out," explained Tanzey.

"The US have more players in one State than we have in the whole country. And it won't change anything for us. We'll concentrate on getting our system right, and let the other teams adapt to us."

In essence, this Australia Cup is part of



National Coach Chris Tanzey: Selection dilemmas.

the process leading up to the Olympic Games. The singular results are not as significant as the eventual outcome.

"The name of the game is you don't get medals for the Australia Cup. This tournament is an exercise in preparation for the Olympics. It won't be the end of the world if we don't win every game. This is seeing what players can do what. Is it working on what we're doing and what needs improving.

It's about where we want to be in nine months time. It's seeing how far along the track we are, and whether what we've learnt can be put into practice in games. Plus it will dictate what we do when we come back in again."

The Matildas last faced Sweden at the World Cup, going down 3-1 to all but end their campaign. Sweden come to Australia with no less than 17 of the World Cup team which gave China a scare, made the quarterfinals, and finished seventh to qualify for Sydney 2000.

"Against Sweden, I want an improved performance," said Tanzey.

"To see if we've got any closer. Are we able to close the gap, is what I'm looking for."

The Czechs could be a danger simply because they are an unknown, and Tanzey regards that match as a measure in whether we are 'smart enough'. "It will take some discipline. This tournament will have a lot to do with mental application in dealing with the unknown."

The three players who made their first Matildas selection for the China Tour have made the team again. Midfielder Danielle Small landed in Australia last week to take up an AIS Scholarship, returning from the US where she has played on a college scholarship for two years.

Goalkeeper Leanne Trimboli will be looking forward to making her debut on the park, whilst Heather Garriock has two caps under her belt from China.

Cheryl Salisbury earns her first national team leadership role, named as vice-captain to assist captain Alison Forman.

2ND AUSTRALIA CUP

AUSTRALIAN TEAM

	State	DOB	Pos	Caps	Goals
Dianne ALAGICH	SA	12/05/79	D	10	0
Sharon BLACK	SA	04/04/71	M	42	15
Katrina BOYD	NSW	12/12/71	F	25	9
Bryony DUUS	QLD	07/10/77	M	14	1
Alison FORMAN (c)	NNSW	17/03/69	M	53	5
Heather GARRIOCK	NSW	21/12/82	M	2	0
Kelly GOLEBIEWSKI	NSW	26/07/81	F	19	0
Peita-Claire HEPPERLIN	ACT	24/12/81	D	7	0
Sunni HUGHES	NNSW	09/06/68	F	47	22
Julie MURRAY	NSW	28/04/70	F	64	18
Cheryl SALISBURY (v-c)	NNSW	08/03/74	D	53	23
Danielle SMALL	NNSW	07/02/79	M	2	0
Bridgette STARR	NSW	10/12/75	D	42	1
Anissa TANN-DARBY	NSW	10/10/67	D	74	7
Leanne TRIMBOLI	SA	10/11/75	GK	0	0
Sacha WAINWRIGHT	ACT	06/02/72	D	19	1
Tracey WHEELER	WA	26/09/67	GK	38	0
Amy WILSON	ACT	09/06/80	M	12	0

DON'T MISS THE ACTION

Make sure you plan your holidays around the upcoming Australia Cup featuring the Matildas, USA, Sweden, and the Czech Republic.

2nd Australia Cup

Fri 7 January Australia v Sweden 6pm
North Sydney Oval, Sydney
(doubleheader with Northern Spirit v Sydney United match)

Fri 7 January USA v Czech Republic 6pm
Olympic Park, Melbourne
(doubleheader with Carlton v Auckland Kingz match)

Mon 10 January USA v Sweden 5.30pm
Bob Jane Stadium, Melbourne
Australia v Czech Republic 7.30pm Bob Jane Stadium, Melbourne

Thu 13 January Sweden v Czech Republic 5.30pm
Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide
Australia v USA 7.30pm Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide

Tickets are available through Northern Spirit (Sydney); Carlton and the Victorian Soccer Federation (Melbourne); and Venuetix (Adelaide).

SWEDEN A REAL WORLD FORCE

With 17 of their World Cup players, Sweden are certain to be a real force in their first trip downunder. Since taking over after the 1996 Olympics, coach Marika Domanski Lyfors has moulded this team into an exciting attacking combination, successfully introducing much new young talent.

Players to watch include captain and defender Cecilia Sandell, voted Swedish 1999 Player of the Year.

World class keeper Ulrika Karlsson played for the World Star Team in the recent US Victory Tour.

Malin Andersson is the team's playmaker and a freekick specialist.

2ND AUSTRALIA CUP

SWEDEN SQUAD

	DOB	Pos	Caps
Ulrika KARLSSON	14/10/70	GK	40
Karolina WESTBERG	16/05/78	D	33
Jane TORNQVIST	09/05/75	D	43
Åsa LÖNNQVIST BELAND	14/04/70	D	67
Kristin BENGTSOON	12/01/70	D	84
Malin MÖSTRÖM	01/08/75	M	15
Cecilia SANDELL	10/06/68	D	48
Malin GUSTAFSSON	24/01/80	F	10
Malin ANDERSSON	04/05/73	M	75
Hanna LJUNGBERG	08/01/79	F	40
Victoria SVENSSON	18/05/77	F	38
Caroline JÖNSSON	22/11/77	GK	3
Ulla-Karin THELIN	19/02/77	GK	3
Hanna MARKLUND	26/11/77	D	14
Jessika SUNDH	09/07/74	D	8
Linda GREEN	12/11/74	M	7
Tina NORDLUND	19/03/77	M	13
Linda FAGERSTRÖM	17/03/77	M	21
Elin FLYBORG	05/10/76	F	0

USA CAN'T BE UNDERESTIMATED

Make no mistake. This young and inexperienced side will still be a quality side. USA boasts over 7 million female players and most have come through the strong college system, and over half the team has extensive Nordic Cup experience.

Each and every one of these players has been handed a golden opportunity to make their mark with just nine months before the Olympic Games.

2ND AUSTRALIA CUP

USA SQUAD

	DOB	Caps
Siri MULLINIX	22/05/78	1
Thori BRYAN	17/04/74	53
Kelly LINDSEY	03/09/79	0
Nandi PRYCE	30/05/82	0
Mandy CLEMENS	03/09/78	1
Veronica ZEPEDA	11/06/82	1
Aly WAGNER	10/08/80	6
Mary Frances MONROE	07/02/80	0
Susan BUSH	10/11/80	3
Aleisha CRAMER	29/07/82	2
Michelle FRENCH	27/01/77	3
Christie WELSH	27/02/81	0
Jenny MASCARO	25/05/78	1
Heather ALDAMA	01/12/78	2
Nikki SERLENGA	20/06/78	0
Sherrill KESTER	07/03/78	0
Danielle SLATON	10/06/80	1
Lakeysia BEENE	09/03/78	0



WORLD

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE



Alan Shearer: Rounds the Leicester keeper to score Newcastle's second. The Geordies won 2-1.

SUNDERLAND 2 MANCHESTER UNITED 2

An absorbing match at the Stadium of Light ended in a draw after Sunderland raced into an early 2-0 lead with goals from Gavin McCann (71 seconds) and Niall Quinn after 13 minutes.

Captain Roy Keane put United back into the match with a well-struck goal after 27 minutes before Nicky Butt scored the equaliser four minutes from time.

ARSENAL 2 LEEDS UNITED 0

Arsenal dominated to secure a well-deserved 2-0 win over the league leaders at Highbury. Fredrik Ljungberg put Arsenal ahead after 32 minutes when he tapped home from close range after goalkeeper Nigel Martyn failed to hold a shot from Nwankwo Kanu.

Thierry Henry added the second after 58 minutes with a left-foot strike after being set up by Kanu on the edge of the box.

BRADFORD CITY 0 EVERTON 0

Despite the lack of goals, both teams went close to scoring with Lee Mills narrowly missing with two second-half headers for the home side.

Everton were the better team for most of the match but Bradford came back strongly and in the end were unlucky not to take all three points.

LEICESTER CITY 1 NEWCASTLE UNITED 2

Newcastle's revival under Bobby Robson continued as goals from strikers Duncan Ferguson (21) and England captain Alan Shearer (53) sent injury-hit

Leicester crashing to a fourth successive league defeat.

Theo Zagorakis pulled one back for the home side seven minutes from time with a well-struck 25-metre free kick.

LIVERPOOL 3 WIMBLEDON 1

England striker Michael Owen put Liverpool ahead after 58 minutes with his eighth goal of the season and his third in the last two matches.

Marcus Gayle equalised with Wimbledon's first attempt on target six minutes later, but Patrik Berger put Liverpool back in front four minutes later.

Substitute Robbie Fowler headed his 150th goal for Liverpool to ensure victory after 80 minutes.

WATFORD 3 SOUTHAMPTON 2

A thrilling match ended with Watford winning for the first time in 15 matches, since beating Chelsea on September 18.

David Perpetuini (17) and Xavier Gravelaine (31, 65) scored their first goals for Watford who appeared to be comfortably heading for victory when they were 2-0 up.

But Southampton struck back with two goals in three minutes from Luis Boa Morte (61) and Kevin Davies (63).

WEST HAM UNITED 1 DERBY COUNTY 1

Dean Sturridge opened the scoring for Derby in the fourth minute and did well to survive with a point from a match dominated by West Ham, who were inspired by a superb performance from teenage midfielder Joe Cole.

The Hammers struck with a superb Paolo di Canio goal after 21 minutes, his 11th of the season.

CHELSEA 3 SHEFF WEDNESDAY 0

Sheffield Wednesday, bottom of the table, posed problems for Chelsea in the early stages and Dutch goalkeeper Ed de Goey had to be sharp to deny Gilles De Bilde and Lee Briscoe. But the arrival of 'flu victim Dennis Wise as a substitute in the 23rd

minute for injured Frenchman Didier Deschamps turned Chelsea's fortunes.

Wise, Chelsea's only Englishman on the pitch at the time, stabbed the ball home in the 32nd minute. Norwegian Tore Andre Flo added a second goal three minutes later and Jody Morris, a late second half substitute, made it 3-0 six minutes from time.

Uruguay's Gustavo Poyet played a key part in all three goals.

ASTON VILLA 1 TOTTENHAM 1

Aston Villa did all the early pressing but Spurs survived, thanks to heroics from goalkeeper Ian Walker, and Tim Sherwood put the visitors in front in the 44th minute with a blistering drive from 30 metres from a square pass by David Ginola.

But Ian Taylor equalised for Villa in the 74th minute with his fourth goal in four games and the points were shared.



Patrick Vieira: Celebrates Arsenal's victory over league leaders Leeds. Arsenal won 2-0.

WE CAN WIN - VIDUKA



Craig Moore & Mark Viduka: Aussie Boys tussle.

Striker Mark Viduka insisted Celtic can still overtake Rangers to win the Scottish Premier League title race, despite seeing his goal equalised by Billy Dodds for a 1-1 draw in the latest derby at Parkhead.

The Australian marksman's 18th goal of the season after 18 minutes ought to have set Celtic on their way to victory — they also hit the woodwork three times — but Dodds replied in the 27th minute.

Celtic remain four points behind their Glasgow rivals, and have played one game more, going into the league's four-week winter break. Viduka said: "If we had lost today it would have been an uphill struggle. It would have been hard to come back if Rangers had gone seven points ahead.

"We were unlucky not to win but but in the second half of the season anything is possible and I think we still have a chance of winning this league."

The Celtic fans who made up the bulk of the 59,722 crowd must have thought they were going to see Celtic's second win in nine derbies after an opening 25 minutes in which they almost swept Rangers off the pitch.

Viduka hit the post after just nine minutes with a curling shot before putting Celtic ahead, taking a pass from Eyal Berkovic and outpacing Rangers captain Lorenzo Amoroso before hitting a right-foot shot past goalkeeper Lionel Charbonnier from 14 metres.

Rangers coach Dick Advocaat said: "To go on the (winter) break with a four-point lead and a game in hand is important. In fact it gives us a good feeling."

Celtic coach John Barnes said: "It was important not to lose this game and I thought we played well. Things are still in our hands because we still have Rangers to play twice in the second half, but we do need them to drop points."



Mark Viduka: Scorer



UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE



GROUP A

Porto (Portugal)
Hertha Berlin (Germany)
Barcelona (Spain)
Sparta Prague (Czech Republic)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Hertha Berlin 1 Barcelona 1
Michalke 33 Luis Enrique 14
Sparta Prague 0 Porto 2
Drulovic 77, Jandel 84

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8

Porto 1 Hertha Berlin 0
Drulovic 78
Barcelona 5 Sparta Prague 0
Kluivert 44, 63
Luis Enrique 45, 76
Guardiola 59

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1

Barcelona v Porto
Hertha Berlin v Sparta Prague

TUESDAY, MARCH 7

Porto v Barcelona
Sparta Prague v Hertha Berlin

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

Barcelona v Hertha Berlin
Porto v Sparta Prague

TUESDAY, MARCH 21

Hertha Berlin v Porto
Sparta Prague v Barcelona

	Table					
Porto	2	2	0	0	3	0 6
Barcelona	2	1	1	0	6	1 4
Hertha Berlin	2	0	1	1	1	2 1
Sparta Prague	2	0	0	2	0	7 0

GROUP B

Bordeaux (France)
Fiorentina (Italy)
Manchester United (England)
Valencia (Spain)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Florentina 2 Manchester Utd 0
Batistuta 25, Balbo 52
Valencia 3 Bordeaux 0
Farinos 60, Ilie 66,
Gonzalez 88

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8

Bordeaux 0 Fiorentina 0
Manchester Utd 3 Valencia 0
Keane 38, Solskjaer 47
Scholes 69

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1

Manchester Utd v Bordeaux
Fiorentina v Valencia

TUESDAY, MARCH 7

Bordeaux v Manchester Utd
Valencia v Fiorentina

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

Manchester Utd v Fiorentina
Bordeaux v Valencia

TUESDAY, MARCH 21

Fiorentina v Bordeaux
Valencia v Manchester Utd

	Table					
Fiorentina	2	1	1	0	2	0 4
Manchester Utd	2	1	0	1	3	2 3
Valencia	2	1	0	1	3	3 3
Bordeaux	2	0	1	1	0	3 1

GROUP C

Bayern Munich (Germany)
Dynamo Kiev (Ukraine)
Real Madrid (Spain)
Rosenborg Trondheim (Norway)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Dynamo Kiev 1 Real Madrid 2
Rebrov 85pen Morientes 17, Raul 48
Rosenborg 1 Bayern Munich 1
Skammelsrud 47 Jancker 10

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7

Bayern Munich 2 Dynamo Kiev 1
Jancker 6, Sergio 80 Rebrov 50
Real Madrid 3 Rosenborg 1
Raul 17, Savio 85 Carew 47
Carlos 90

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29

Real Madrid v Bayern Munich
Dynamo Kiev v Rosenborg

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

Bayern Munich v Real Madrid
Rosenborg v Dynamo Kiev

TUESDAY, MARCH 14

Real Madrid v Dynamo Kiev
Bayern Munich v Rosenborg

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

Dynamo Kiev v Bayern Munich
Rosenborg v Real Madrid

	Table					
Real Madrid	2	2	0	0	5	2 6
Bayern Munich	2	1	1	0	3	2 4
Rosenborg	2	0	1	1	2	4 1
Dynamo Kiev	2	0	0	2	2	4 0

GROUP D

Feyenoord (Netherlands)
Olympique Marseille (France)
Lazio (Italy)
Chelsea (England)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Marseille 0 Lazio 2
Stankovic 64,
Conceicao 78
Chelsea 3 Feyenoord 1
Babayaro 45 Julio Cruz 90
Tore Flo 67, 86

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7

Feyenoord 3 Marseille 0
Cruz 72, 90
Bosvelt 83
Lazio 0 Chelsea 0

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29

Lazio v Feyenoord
Marseille v Chelsea

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

Feyenoord v Lazio
Chelsea v Marseille

TUESDAY, MARCH 14

Lazio v Marseille
Feyenoord v Chelsea

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

Marseille v Feyenoord
Chelsea v Lazio

	Table					
Chelsea	2	1	1	0	3	1 4
Lazio	2	1	1	0	2	0 4
Feyenoord	2	1	0	1	4	3 3
Marseille	2	0	0	2	0	5 0

BLATTER AND JOHANSSON END FEUD

FIFA president Sepp Blatter says he has patched up his differences with European soccer chief Lennart Johansson.

Blatter and UEFA president Johansson were bitter rivals in a long fight to succeed Joao Havelange as FIFA president but Blatter now says they have settled their differences and are now allies.

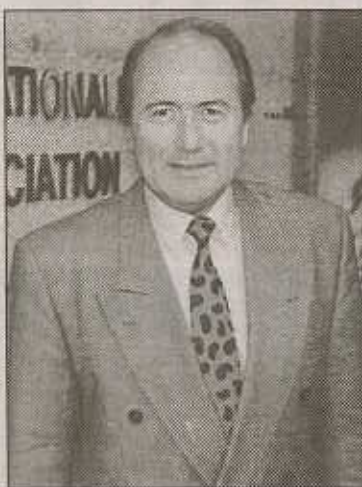
"Lennart and I, but also UEFA secretary-general Gerd Aigner and FIFA secretary-general Michel Zen-Ruffinen, buried the hatchet at the World Cup draw in Tokyo (this month) but this does not make headlines," he said.

Blatter reiterated FIFA's agreement with UEFA that teams should limit the number of foreign players to five despite the Bosman ruling which led to abolishing transfer regulations.

"The limit is important so that fans' identification with teams and the motivation of young players is not lost. UEFA president Lennart Johansson and I have held talks with European Union authorities. I think we could have this happen," he said.

UNITED FRONT

Switzerland's Blatter and Sweden's Johansson presented a united front on the



Sepp Blatter: The feud is over.

topic in Brussels in November, although the EU commissioner for sport, Viviane Reding, said at the time the Commission could not overturn the Bosman ruling.

Blatter also appears to be backing away from his proposal to hold the World Cup every two years, twice as often as at present, which was another issue on which he and Johansson clashed.

Johansson told Blatter the plan was "an insult" to European football, which at present stages its own championship finals two years after each World Cup final tournament.

In an editorial in FIFA News, issued this week in advance of publication early next month, Blatter said the key issue facing the game was harmonising the international match calendar, rather than the frequency of the World Cup.

"If the harmonisation of the international calendar eventually results in the World Cup becoming twice as frequent as at present, then so be it, as I

continue to believe that this idea is worthy of consideration," he said. "If not, then we will have lost nothing."



QUARTER FINALS

First Leg — April 5
Second Leg — April 19

SEMI-FINALS

First Leg — May 3
Second Leg — May 10

FINAL

Wednesday, May 24
At Stade de France



FIFA

World Rankings

(Valid until January 22)

1 Brazil	69 Honduras	137 St Kitts & Nevis
2 Czech Republic	70 Estonia	138 Panama
3 France	71= Burkina Faso	139 Tahiti
4 Spain	71= Mali	140 Benin
5 Germany	73 Guatemala	141 St Vincent/Gr
6 Argentina	74 Gabon	142 Ethiopia
7 Norway	75 Bosnia-Herz.	143 Maldives
8 Romania	76 Nigeria	144 Solomon Islands
9 Croatia	77= Cuba	145= Andorra
10 Mexico	77= Iraq	145= Rwanda
11 Denmark	79 Senegal	147= Antigua & Barbuda
12 England	80 Namibia	147= Cayman Islands
13 Yugoslavia	81 Canada	149= Dominica
14 Italy	82 Kuwait	149= San Marino
15 Portugal	83 Albania	151= Gambia
16 Sweden	84 Northern Ireland	151= Saint Lucia
17 Paraguay	85 Armenia	153 Sri Lanka
18 Russia	86 Algeria	154 Lesotho
19 Netherlands	87 Togo	155 Dominican Rep.
20 Scotland	88 China PR	156 Laos
21 Slovakia	89 AUSTRALIA	157 Nepal
22 United States	89 Indonesia	158 Yemen
23 Chile	91 Guinea	159 Kyrgyzstan
24 Morocco	92 Oman	160 Mauritania
25 Colombia	93 Moldova	161 British Virgin Is.
26 Israel	94 Congo	162 Surinam
26 Ukraine	95= Belarus	163= Bermuda
28 Austria	95= El Salvador	163= Niger
29 Turkey	97 Azerbaijan	165 Botswana
30 South Africa	98 Wales	166 Chad
31 Tunisia	99 Haiti	167 Neth. Antilles
32 Poland	100 New Zealand	168= Cambodia
33 Belgium	101 Mozambique	168= Eritrea
34 Greece	102 Vietnam	170 Palestine
35 Republic of Ireland	103 Kenya	171 Guyana
36 Zambia	104 Singapore	172 Korea DPR
37 Bulgaria	105 Liberia	173 Guinea-Bissau
38 Egypt	106 India	174 Chinese Taipei
38 Saudi Arabia	107 Qatar	175 C. African Rep.
40 Slovenia	108 Uganda	176 Macao
41 Jamaica	109 Syria	177= Cape Verde Is.
42 Peru	110 Venezuela	177= Tonga
43 Iceland	111 Lebanon	179= Pakistan
43 Trinidad & Tobago	112 Faroe Islands	179= Samoa
45 Hungary	113 Barbados	181 Philippines
45 Uruguay	114 Malawi	182 Cook Islands
47 Switzerland	115 Jordan	183 PNG
48 Ghana	116 Malta	184 Vanuatu
48 Iran	117 Malaysia	185 Brunei Darussalam
50 Lithuania	118 Mauritius	186 Puerto Rico
51 Korea Republic	119 Tajikistan	187 Sao Tome e Principe
52 Angola	120 Sierra Leone	188 Equatorial Guinea
53 Cote d' Ivoire	121 Grenada	189 Bahamas
53 UAE Emirates	122 Hong Kong	190 Belize
55 Uzbekistan	123= Kazakhstan	191 Aruba
56 Finland	123= Luxembourg	192 Seychelles
57 Japan	125 Liechtenstein	193 Nicaragua
58 Cameroon	126 Myanmar	194 US Virgin Islands
59 Congo DR (Zaire)	127= Swaziland	195 Djibouti
60 Thailand	127= Tanzania	196 Turks & Caicos Islands
61 Bolivia	129 Turkmenistan	197 Somalia
62 Latvia	130= Bangladesh	198 Mongolia
63 Cyprus	130= Libya	198 American Samoa
64 Costa Rica	132 Sudan	200= Guam
65 Ecuador	133 Burundi	200= Montserrat
66 Georgia	134 Madagascar	202 Anguilla
67 Zimbabwe	135 Fiji	
68 FYR Macedonia	136 Bahrain	

Note: Teams inactive since 1991 and teams which have not played yet do not appear in the table.



SCHMEICHEL BUYS DANISH CLUB

Denmark goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel has bought Copenhagen soccer club Hvidovre, where he made his debut in 1984.

No price for the deal, announced last week, was given by the club but it confirmed Schmeichel had bought a 100 percent shareholding and that Swedish telecoms carrier Telia would act as Hvidovre's main sponsor.

Hvidovre play in Denmark's first division, immediately below the country's top flight, the super league.

Former Manchester United keeper Schmeichel was Hvidovre's goalkeeper for two seasons from 1984-86, playing 94 matches as a semi-professional and scoring seven penalty goals for the suburban Copenhagen team.

Schmeichel, 36, signed a two-year contract with Portugal's Sporting Lisbon last June after ending an eight-year career with Manchester United.



Peter Schmeichel: From player to owner.

NO BI-ANNUAL WORLD CUP

FIFA General Secretary Sepp Blatter last week appeared to be backing away from his proposal for a soccer World Cup to be held every two years, twice as often as at present.

In an editorial in the world soccer body's monthly FIFA News, issued in advance of publication early next month, he said the key issue facing the game was harmonising the international match calendar.

Blatter, whose proposal in a newspaper interview a year ago caused a storm of criticism as well as winning some support, said he had primarily aimed at sparking debate on the calendar.

"This subject, far less spectacular in

itself than the frequency of the World Cup, has finally acquired the urgent attention that it deserves," he wrote.

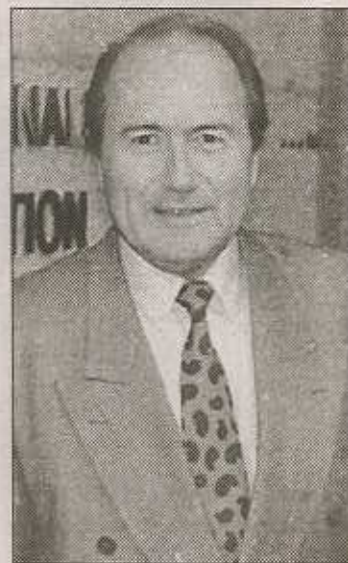
Over the past year, he said, enormous progress had been made on the issue by the regional soccer confederations under FIFA's leadership.

The value of this work would be shown when 195 teams embarked on over 700 qualifying matches for the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea.

Over 80 percent of these games would take place on coordinated dates, ensuring that clubs would not be deprived at different times of their key players due to call-up for national team duty.

"If the harmonisation of the international calendar eventually results in the World Cup becoming twice as frequent as at present, then so be it, as I continue to believe that this idea is worthy of consideration," Blatter said.

"If not, then we will have lost nothing — on the contrary, we shall have succeeded in overcoming a major logistical problem in the organisation of



Sepp Blatter: Backing away.

modern, top-class football."

Blatter said everyone, from FIFA and continental and national associations to the clubs, the players and the fans, would still win from such an outcome.



GROBBELAAR TO COACH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Former Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar is to be caretaker coach of South African premier league club SuperSport United, South African television reported last week.

Grobbelaar, 42, will take charge of the Pretoria-based club until the season ends in May, with his first priority

being to lift the team away from the relegation zone.

Grobbelaar coached another club in South Africa last season, taking Cape Town-based Seven Stars to fifth place in the final standings. He also previously coached Zimbabwe's national team in a caretaker capacity.



Bruce Grobbelaar: Caretaker coach.



TEAM OF THE CENTURY



LIVERPOOL or MAN UTD?



Liverpool and Manchester United are locked in battle to be crowned as English football's most successful club of the century.

It is fitting that the honour of being acclaimed as the top team of the 20th Century can only be decided during the final week of 1999.

The arch-rivals' epic challenge eloquently reflects the glorious battle for

and the FA Cup - over the past century.

We have awarded five points for each Championship triumph, with three points for finishing a campaign as runners-up.

In the FA Cup - the world's greatest knock-out competition - the winners have received four points and the losing finalists two points.

By combining the Cup and League records, we can reveal the ABSWmerit rankings that constitute our Club of the Century accolade.

Liverpool have won 18 League titles and come second nine times: that's 117 points. And their FA Cup exploits add 32 points for a grand total of 149.

Manchester United have 12 first places, 12 second places, 10 FA Cup triumphs and five Final defeats. They weigh in with 146 points.

Arsenal are a fairly distant third, totaling 107 points for the century.

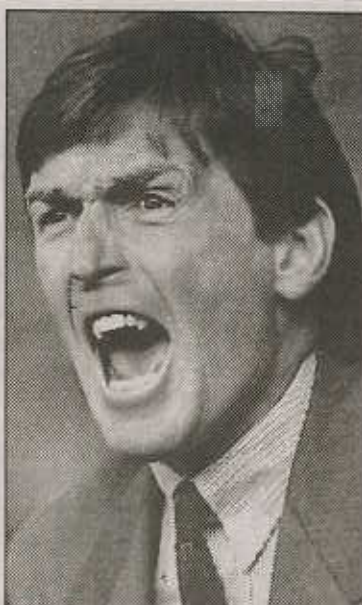
After this week's final matches of the century, Manchester United ended 1999 at second on the Premiership ladder.

They will collect three extra points and finish level with Liverpool in our unique chart.

Had they finished 1999 at the summit of the Premiership, they would have received five extra points and nosed ahead of Liverpool.

It's a tie!

Clearly, in terms of League competition, Liverpool are streets ahead of the rest. Their 18 titles leaves them six clear of United. And while United have finished in the top two a creditable 24 times, the Merseysiders have been a model of consistency,



Kenny Dalglish: A former player, brought glory to Liverpool as a Manager as well.

Ironically, Sir Alex has clocked up five Premier League triumphs in just seven years.

The presence of Arsenal and Everton in the League pack chasing the northern giants is hardly surprising. In terms of winning titles, they have been the most successful of the rest. In fact, if a statistician had compiled this list half-way through the century Arsenal would have been leaders.

Another sign of yesterday's glory boys comes with Huddersfield Town's status as the ninth best League team of the century. Three consecutive titles from 1924 provided their moments of glory.

It will not go unnoticed in Yorkshire that Huddersfield are hanging on to Leeds United's coat-tails and with five Cup final appearances to



Alex Ferguson: All conquering Man. Utd coach.

Tottenham Hotspur not too far away.

It will be heartbreaking for Sheffield Wednesday fans to see their club, currently heading out of the Premiership, rated as the tenth best league team of the century.

The days before the maximum wage for players was abolished and the likes of Burnley and Portsmouth could win the League also highlight the paucity of Chelsea's achievements in real terms.

The upwardly mobile west London club are firmly put in their place - 20th in the all-time list with just one League title to their name - behind Blackburn Rovers, Preston and Bolton Wanderers.



Denis Law, Sir Bobby Charlton and George Best: Man. Utd's finest.

enjoying 27 top-two finishes.

Many people believe Liverpool only became a football force in the contemporary times of Bill Shankly, Bob Paisley, Joe Fagan and Kenny Dalglish. They do the Merseysiders a disservice.

Thirteen titles in 26 years from 1964 highlight a prolonged golden era no other club can match.

But Liverpool are not mere 'johnnycome-latelys' of the sporting scene.

They actually won the first Championship of the century and had clocked up five titles to United's two before Matt Busby inspired the Mancunians in the modern era and led them to their first crown under his management in 1952.

Busby went on to win five titles in his 34 years at Old Trafford.

their name have made one more FA Cup visit to Wembley than their neighbours from Elland Road.

If Arsenal were a dominant force in the opening half of the century, Leeds' status as overall 10th best team in the land, and sixth equal in the League, reflects their role as the nouveau riche.

Every point accumulated by Leeds in our listing has come since 1965 - a reflection of the transformation Don Revie masterminded at Elland Road.

Our FA Cup listing for the century highlights that while Manchester United have endured long spells without a Championship, they have consistently enjoyed their Cup sorties.

Arsenal, with seven FA Cup wins, lead the pack in the Old Trafford slipstream, with Newcastle United and



Ryan Giggs: Man. Utd star of the 90s.



Ian Rush: Liverpool's goalscoring machine.

power at the summit of the domestic game during the past 100 years.

For our exclusive ABSW analysis, we have collated the results in English football's two blue riband events - the League Championship



Bill Shankly: Made Liverpool a football force.



WORLD

RONALDO WEDS

Brazilian star Ronaldo last week married model and soccer devotee Milene Domingues in a modest civil wedding at the house belonging to the Inter Milan striker's mother in a luxury district of Rio de Janeiro.

After the ceremony, which was closed to the press, a limping Ronaldo, 23, who is still recovering from knee surgery, and his visibly pregnant 22-year-old wife in a long white wedding dress spoke to reporters outside.

"We are very happy. It is a special day which I have always imagined," a smiling Ronaldo said, sipping champagne after kissing his wife for the cameras on the lawn outside the expensive house he bought for his mother.

The newly-weds were to spend the next two weeks in Angra dos Reis resort near Rio, after which Ronaldo has to go to France for a check-up on his damaged knee. The couple's baby, a boy, is due in April.

Brazilian soccer commentators hope that marriage will help Ronaldo get his faltering career back on track after a year in which they claim he has appeared more often in the social columns of newspapers than the sports pages.

Media critics say Ronaldo is under the permanent influence of his managers and image-makers.

Ronaldo chose his agent, Reinaldo Pitta, and Aloisio Freitas, financial director of his firm Gortin Promocoes, as his witnesses at the wedding. The bride chose her two brothers, Leandro and Leonardo. A church wedding is set for June.

Wedding guests included two of Ronaldo's close personal friends from his early years in a poor Rio neighbourhood. The Folha de Sao Paulo newspaper quoted the pair as complaining that they had never worn suits before and would feel uncomfortable and hot.

Newspapers said the wedding and the party afterwards would cost little more than \$8,000. The groom's suit and the bride's dress were gifts from Italian designer Giorgio Armani. Ronaldo gave



Ronaldo and new wife Milene Domingues: A happy day.

Domingues a Jeep Cherokee sports utility vehicle as a present, which she drove to the ceremony.

Ronaldo was accused of flouting his wealth when he showed off a new Ferrari to the media and flirting with danger when he told them that he had driven the 420 kilometres from Sao Paulo to Rio, a notoriously dangerous road, in four hours.

More recently, Ronaldo appeared to have been working hard to rebuild his image and popularity, an example being his trip to Kosovo to lend support to children's projects, which included a generous donation.

He has been hampered by knee problems over the past two seasons and has never truly recaptured the breathtaking form he showed during his first season in Italy, in 1997-98, following his move from Barcelona.

Ronaldo underwent an operation on damaged knee tendons earlier this month and is expected to be out of action until around April or May, near the end of the Italian season. He picked up the injury in Inter's 6-0 Serie A win over Lecce on November 21.

INTER SIGN SEEDORF

Inter Milan clinched the signing of Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf from Real Madrid in a \$24.35 million deal last week, the Spanish club said.

"The signing is now official, subject to a medical," Real vice-president Juan Onieva said on Spanish television after meetings with Inter officials and Seedorf's father, who acts as his representative.

"We've been negotiating for about a month with Inter over this deal."

Onieva, who is in charge of economic affairs at the Spanish club, had earlier said: "This is a great deal from a finan-

cial point of view."

Seedorf, still only 23, has emerged during his 3-1/2 years at the club as one of Real's most bankable assets.

A busy, attacking midfielder, he possesses a fierce shot and a coolness that doubtless comes from having won virtually everything in club soccer at such an early age.

At Ajax Amsterdam, he won two league titles, a European Cup and a European Supercup, while at Madrid he added another European Cup and Supercup, plus one Spanish league title.

Seedorf, who played for Sampdoria for a season before moving to Spain in



Clarence Seedorf: Off to Italy.

1996, has been linked frequently with a move back to Italy.

He appeared to be on the brink of leaving the Bernabeu in the close season after a difficult 1998-1999 campaign at Real, when he struggled for form and was fined several times for disciplinary matters.

But a return to the first team this season saw him pledge his future to the club last month.

"People can come knocking on my door, offering a lot of money, but I'm not moving," Seedorf was quoted as saying back then.

ANDERLECHT RELEASE SCIFO

Belgian league leaders Anderlecht have told veteran midfielder Enzo Scifo he is free to discuss a possible transfer to Standard Liege.

Scifo's existing contract with the Brussels club expires at the end of

this season and Anderlecht have turned down a request from the former international for a two-year renewal.

"We've told Enzo there's no guarantee we can offer him anything new and he's free to talk to Standard,"

Anderlecht club manager Michel Verschueren said.

Scifo, 33, said he felt liberated and would give priority to Standard, who want him to replace international striker Mbo Mpenza who is set to move to Sporting Lisbon.

Scifo, who earlier this season underwent emergency treatment after a lung collapsed following a shoulder operation, said he would not make any snap decisions and had not ruled out a move abroad.

Bill Hurley's Australian SPORTSBOOK

Phone: (02) 9897 0888 (see page 5 for more details)

EURO 2000

Holland	\$5.00
Italy	\$6.50
France	\$8.00
Spain	\$7.00
Germany	\$9.00
England	\$13.00
Czech Republic	\$17.00
Sweden	\$17.00
Yugoslavia	\$26.00
Norway	\$26.00
Portugal	\$26.00
Romania	\$26.00
Belgium	\$26.00
Denmark	\$51.00
Turkey	\$67.00
Slovenia	\$126.00

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Barcelona	\$3.75
Lazio	\$4.00
Man United	\$5.50
Chelsea	\$8.00
Bayern Munich	\$12.00
Real Madrid	\$10.00
Fiorentina	\$15.00
Valencia	\$21.00
Porto	\$26.00
Bordeaux	\$81.00
Rosenborg	\$81.00
Feyenoord	\$101.00
Hertha	\$101.00
Marseille	\$151.00
Dynamo Kiev	\$151.00
Sparta Prague	\$501.00

UEFA CUP

Juventus	\$5.00
Parma	\$7.50
Arsenal	\$8.00
Roma	\$8.00
Leeds	\$12.00
Deportivo	\$15.00
Borussia Dortmund	\$15.00
Monaco	\$17.00
Celta Vigo	\$17.00
Atletico Madrid	\$21.00
Real Mallorca	\$21.00
Udinese	\$26.00
Galatasaray	\$26.00
Werder Bremen	\$34.00
Lens	\$41.00
Slavia Prague	\$51.00

ITALIAN SERIE A

Lazio	\$2.25
Juventus	\$3.50
Inter Milan	\$6.00
Parma	\$8.00
AC Milan	\$9.00
Roma	\$11.00
Fiorentina	\$67.00

SPANISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Barcelona	\$2.25
Deportivo	\$2.35
Celta Vigo	\$8.00
Real Madrid	\$15.00
Valencia	\$15.00
Real Zaragoza	\$21.00
Real Mallorca	\$41.00
Athletic Bilbao	\$67.00
Real Betis	\$81.00
Vallecano	\$81.00
Atletico Madrid	\$101.00



REAL MADRID: THE DECLINE

SPECIAL REPORT

Clarence Seedorf's Christmas Eve transfer from Real Madrid to Inter Milan will bring the struggling Spanish club a welcome \$24-million payday as a difficult and expensive year of rebuilding draws to a close.

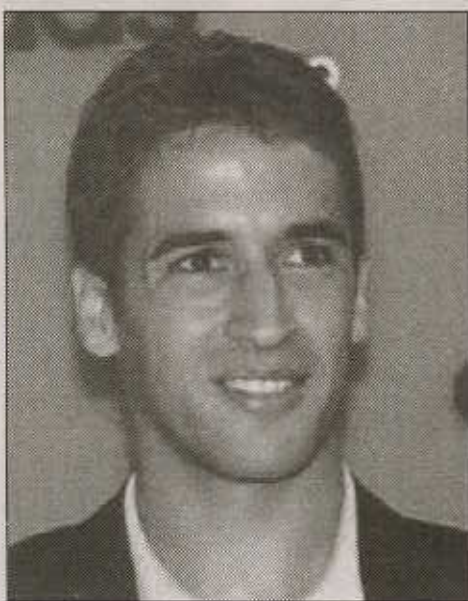
Seedorf's departure from a club whose debts are estimated by some to be close to \$200 million makes him the 10th player from Real's 1998 European Cup winning squad to be offloaded.

Real are facing a punishing schedule in the New Year as they bid to win the inaugural World Club Championship, continue to make progress in the Champions League and get back into contention for the Spanish league title.

Yet the club, struggling in ninth place in the Spanish first division, insist they will not spend any more money between now and mid-January, when the Spanish transfer window closes for the season.

"For the moment there aren't going to be any more signings," said club vice-president Juan Onieva. "There are no operations planned for the current transfer window."

Real have, in fact, been one of the most active



Raul: Club Stalwart.

clubs in the transfer market since winning their last European title 19 months ago, with around \$100 million being spent on new players.

But the inability of the likes of Nicolas Anelka — who accounted for more than a third of that money — to make an impact on the field has cast doubts over whether Real can regain their status as one of the elite clubs of European football.

LOST CONFIDENCE

The current first-team squad at the Bernabeu certainly looks to be weaker than the one that travelled to Amsterdam to make soccer history in May 1998.

Of the 10 players to leave, only Seedorf, Christian Panucci, Predrag Mijatovic and Davor Suker were established first-team players but all 10 of them have been missed as the side has lost form and confidence.

Reserve goalkeeper Santiago Canizares, now with Valencia, has been the most damaging departure for the club as Bodo Illgner has struggled for form and fitness.

Since leaving, Canizares has emerged as the Spanish number one and will be Jose Antonio Camacho's first choice when the squad for Euro 2000 is announced.

Also going on to greater things has been reserve striker Dani Garcia, who left in 1998 for Real Mallorca, scored 12 goals in his first season and then transferred for \$15.5 million to Barcelona.

Another young forward Victor Sanchez also scored 12 goals for his new club Racing Santander, while winger Jose Amavisca — also picked up by Racing — continues to improve and is now a first-team regular.

Mijatovic and Suker departed the Real forward line in 1999 after falling out with former coach John Toshack.

WEAK DEFENCE

With current centre forward Fernando Morientes a long way from his best and Anelka so far contributing little more than the odd sensational headline, Raul Gonzalez has been leading the Real attack almost single-handed.

In defence, Real have missed the uncomplicated talents of Italian Panucci following his move to Inter Milan.

His replacement Michel Salgado, more a wing-back than a full-back, has occasionally looked dangerous with his forays up the wing but defensively Real have suffered, conceding 29 league goals in 17 games so far.

The other little-known players to have left have done just as well at their new clubs as their expensive replacements have at Real Madrid.

Central defender Fernando Sanz, the much-criticised son of the president, has started to rebuild his career at Malaga, while promising young mid-



Nicolas Anelka: Failed to deliver.

fielder Jaime Sanchez has found his feet at league leaders Deportivo Coruna.

In their stead came Brazilian defender Julio Cesar, who has since been relegated to the bench, and Toshack favourite Geremi Njitap, who has failed to convince new coach Vicente del Bosque.

Real can claim to have been unlucky with new signings Steve McManaman and Elvir Balic, both of whom have seen their progress held up by injury.

STABILITY NEEDED

But the suspicion remains that, more by poor judgement than bad luck, the quality of players in the current squad has significantly dipped in the last couple of years.

Where Real have really failed, however, has been in formulating a long-term plan for the future — hardly surprising considering the turnover in coaches since 1998.

Jupp Heynckes was sacked just eight days after the European Cup win, while neither Guus Hiddink nor Toshack were given time to make a mark at the club.

Del Bosque is expected to make way for a more high-profile figure at the end of the season and the Real players now admit the club is crying out for some stability.

Argentine midfielder Fernando Redondo revealed the thinking in the dressing-room this week.

"The players have been talking about this among ourselves and we all agree we need a long-term project," Redondo said.

"What we're looking for is to follow the same line. That's beneficial for everyone — the players and the club."



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NIGERIA BUILD UP IN REAL TROUBLE

Nigeria's build-up to the African Nations Cup finals next month has been hit by overseas clubs refusing to release key players.

Co-hosts Nigeria and defending champions Egypt are among the countries battling against time to prepare for the 16-team event starting on January 22.

Nigeria coach Jo Bonfrere, who returned to the job only a month ago, has been unable to gather all his leading players in Malaga, Spain, for a planned training camp, leading to an official complaint to FIFA.

Yusuf Tijani, secretary-general of the Nigerian Football Association, said an appeal had been lodged to FIFA to obtain the release of African Footballer of the Year Nwankwo Kanu from English club Arsenal, Austin Okocha from Paris St Germain and Taribo West from AC Milan, as well as Celestine Babayaro from England's Chelsea.

"We need them for our final preparations but unfortunately their clubs have refused to release them in good time," Tijani said.

Only 16 of the 29 players invited to the camp in Malaga arrived on time and a makeshift side was beaten 4-1 by second division Compostela in their first training match.

Bonfrere, who was coach when Nigeria won gold at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, has warned he will drop players who do not attend the camp.

Cold weather has also forced the side to train indoors.

Egypt's new coach Gerard Gili has already run into trouble with the coun-



Nwankwo Kanu: The African player of the year is centre of the Club vs Country debate.

try's vociferous media after he banned journalists from the team's training sessions.

A boycott of the side's activities was announced by the Sports Journalists Association, whose members walked out of a press conference Gili had just begun and demanded an apology from the Egyptian Football Federation.

Gili's first game in charge saw Egypt lose 2-1 at home to Ghana and then struggle to beat lowly Namibia 1-0 in Cairo. The side play Togo, then Namibia again, before they start the

defence of their African championship.

Tunisia's coach Francesco Scoglio was also the subject of a barrage of press criticism despite his country's 2-0 win over Ghana last week, accused of playing key personnel out of position and ignoring the form of experienced veterans.

Tunisia, whose players are observing the annual Ramadhan fast, will train in Malaga from December 30 to January 6 and then play Togo in a warm-up international on January 7 in Tunis.

Ghana, the other co-hosts, saw their 14-month unbeaten run under Italian coach Guiseppe Dossena end with defeat in Tunis but the country have been playing in a five-nation tournament in Libya.

Zambia's cash-strapped team are expecting an injection of government support for their preparations after a stand-off between the Football Association of Zambia and the sports ministry ended with the resignation of the association's entire executive committee this month.

The team had an ill-fated training trip to the United States which they cut short because of a lack of funds and because almost all of their promised matches were not arranged.

The hopes of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been hit by the refusal of top striker Shabani Nonda to play for them in the finals despite recently taking out citizenship.

Shabani, who was born in Burundi of Congolese parents, has told officials he wants to stay in France to help struggling Rennes in their fight against possible relegation.

TV GUIDE

All times are Australian Eastern Standard Summer Time

Tuesday January 4
English Premier League
Everton v Leicester (LIVE)
Fox Sports
4.30am - 8am

Futbol Mundial
SBS TV
4pm - 4.30pm

Wednesday January 5
English Premier League
Coventry v Chelsea (LIVE)
Fox Sports
6am - 9am

English Premier League Highlights
Fox Sports
4.30pm - 6.30pm

European Soccer Show
Optus Vision (C7 Sport 12)
10.30pm - 11.30pm

Thursday January 6
Italian Serie A
Venezia v Lazio (LIVE)
Optus Vision (ESPN)
6.25am - 8.30am

Soccer Scene
Fox Sports
5.30pm - 6.30pm

Soccer Central
Optus Vision (C7 Sport 12)
10.00pm - 11pm

Friday January 7
Italian Serie A
Bologna v Cagliari (LIVE)
Optus Vision (ESPN)
6.25am - 8.30am

World Club Championship
Vasco Da Gama v Sth Melbourne (LIVE)
SBS TV
9.30am - 12pm

English Premier League Highlights
(Replay)
Fox Sports 2
10am - 12pm

National Soccer League
Carlton v Auckland (LIVE)
Optus Vision (C7 Sport 12)
7.30pm - 9.30pm

English Premier League
Replays of last weekend's games
Fox Sports 2
11.55pm - 4am

Saturday January 8
UEFA Champions League
SBS TV
3.30pm - 4.30pm

World Soccer
SBS TV
4.30pm - 5.30pm

English Premier League (Replay)
SBS TV
5.30pm - 6.30pm

National Soccer League
Newcastle v Sydney Olympic
Optus Vision (C7 Sport 13)
7.30pm - 9.30pm

English FA Cup Round 4
Teams TBA (LIVE)
Fox Sports
2am - 4am

Sunday January 9
World Club Championship
South Melbourne v Necaxa (LIVE)
SBS TV
9.30am - 11.30am

On the Ball
SBS TV
11.30am - 12.30pm

English FA Cup Round 4
Teams TBA (Replay)
Fox Sports 2
12.30pm - 2.30pm

National Soccer League highlights
ABC TV
5pm - 7pm

National Soccer League
Marconi v Parramatta
Optus Vision (C7 Sport 13)
7.30pm - 9.30pm

Football Extra
Optus Vision (ESPN)
9pm - 10pm

Italian Serie A
Parma v Juventus (LIVE)
Optus Vision (ESPN)
10.55pm - 1am

English FA Cup Round 4
Teams TBA (LIVE)
Fox Sports
12.45am - 5am

Monday January 10
Italian Serie A
AC Milan v Roma (LIVE)
Optus Vision (ESPN)
6.25am - 8.30am

Best Of English Soccer
Optus Vision (C7 Sport 13)
5pm - 6pm

Monday January 10
English FA Cup Round 4
Teams TBA (Replays)
Fox Sports 2
5pm - 9pm

English Premier League Program
SBS TV
7.30pm - 8.30pm

Italian Serie A
Fiorentina v Inter Milan (LIVE)
Optus Vision (ESPN)
2am - 4am
(Tuesday morning)

Tuesday January 11
Futbol Mundial
SBS TV
4.00pm - 4.30pm



LAZIO WANT RIVALDO

Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson assured European footballer of the year Rivaldo on Tuesday he would be welcome at the Rome club if he left Barcelona.

"Rivaldo? If he were to show up here at Formello we'd find a place for him without any problem," Eriksson told reporters at Lazio's Formello training ground. "Who wouldn't want Rivaldo in their squad?"

Lazio have been linked with Rivaldo since the Brazilian forward had a fall-out over tactics with

Barcelona coach Louis van Gaal and was dropped from the Catalan side's first team.

Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper reported a week ago that Lazio were ready to pay a world record 120 billion lire (\$62.53 million) to bring Rivaldo to Rome when the Italian winter transfer window opens on January 4.

Corriere dello Sport said this week that Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti was trying to arrange a meeting with Rivaldo's agent Jose Maria Minguella early in the New Year.



Rivaldo: Lazio will find him a home.

RUDDOCK OUT FOR SIX WEEKS

West Ham defender Neil Ruddock could be out of action for six weeks after suffering an eye injury in a weekend English premier league match.

Ruddock, 31, fractured his eye socket in the first half of the 2-2 draw with Wimbledon but refused to be substituted

during the break.

"The club doctor said I should come off," he said.

"But I told them 'no way' and finished the game not feeling in the best of shape.

"Afterwards the doctor pinched my nose and told me to blow.

My eye blew up like a balloon, which

the doc said was a certain sign I'd fractured the socket," he said.

"The doc says I was very lucky I didn't get another whack."

Ruddock reported that his eye now looked like "the backside of an orang utan" and he did not expect to be back until February at the earliest."



GENIUS OR JUST CRAZY?

Paolo Di Canio is enjoying a renaissance at West Ham. Will it last?

An old team-mate and friend of Paolo Di Canio once remarked: 'From very early on, I knew he was extremely talented. So talented that, had he not been a footballer, he would have been a musician, an artist - or a Third World dictator.'

Even among his closest confidants and most ardent admirers, it seems, praise of the irrepressible Italian must always carry a caveat, usually concerning temperament.

And yet, if his renaissance at West Ham continues in spectacular fashion, the day will come

Burns, believes Di Canio would make an ideal replacement for Gianfranco Zola at Chelsea.

So surely the time has come to forget about one half-hearted shove on a stumbling ref, the odd outburst of emotion and the spate of indiscipline which was left behind when Di Canio joined the Hammers.

A mere seven bookings in 41 games points to a more controlled nature, while 15 goals have peppered an Upton Park career which has included defence-destroying performances against the best teams in England, with Manchester United nearly the latest victims recently.

Inter Milan boss Lippi, a man who dominated Europe with Juventus, said: 'Paolo was a similar player to Maradona because he excited fans with his skill. He was his equal.'

'When we were at Napoli, the whole city was in a state of mourning and depression because of the downfall of Diego. But Paolo became the fantasy of the whole of Naples.'

'When I look back at all of the players I have managed, Di Canio must be one of my favourites.'

High praise indeed, backed up by Burns, who plucked Di Canio from the fringes of the AC Milan squad for under £1million. 'I knew from the moment I saw him that he had what was needed to handle the pressure of playing at Celtic,' said Burns. 'After working with him for a year, I was left with absolutely no doubts that he would be a success in England.'

'Looking at how he has developed, I believe he could play for any club now, provided you give him his head. He could easily do for Chelsea what Zola does for them now so, if Zola were to leave, he would be an ideal replacement.'

'He will give you everything and, when needed, he can play in a tight, organised unit - I've seen him do that very well. To get the best out of him, though, you just have to let him do his thing in the last third.'

'A lot of people think he's just a showman but he is the kind of player who hurts opponents. What most don't realise is that he is such a professional. If he strips off you'll see a perfectly-honed physique and he trains like a beast.'

'It makes it very easy to coach a player if you know you will always get his best. The way you see Paolo charging around 100 per cent committed on a Saturday, that is the way he is every day in training.'

That isn't hard to believe, particularly when you take into account the possibly apocryphal tale of how Di Canio watches one popular game show only on video, pausing the tape to look up any answer which escapes his general knowledge, then celebrating as if he's won the million when his 'guess' is proved correct.

Clearly, Di Canio has a competitive streak which, if unchecked by the rigours of football, might just have resulted in the citizens of some

banana republic lining up to hail President Paolo.

That desire to prove himself has brought more troubles than trophies to the former Lazio and Juventus player, who could never make himself a key performer at one of the bigger Italian clubs, and who forced his way out of both Celtic and Sheffield Wednesday in acrimonious circumstances.

Carbone, a pal brought closer to Di Canio by their combined war of attrition at Hillsborough, is himself

tipped to replace Zola at Stamford Bridge.

He recognises the down side of his friend's typically Roman personality yet would still rather play alongside Paolo than any of his previous team-mates, who just happen to include the ice man Bergkamp during his time at Inter.

'In terms of technical gifts, Paolo is by far the best player I've ever played with,' said Carbone.

'Maybe his personality is such that he hasn't achieved what he might have.'

'If you live by your own principles, you have sometimes to pay the price.'

For Di Canio, at 31, that price can be counted in the medals he should have won - but instead went to less talented players.

Still, there is time to make amends at West Ham, or perhaps some other club over the closing years of his career. And then there's always politics.



Paolo Di Canio: Looking to the heavens for spiritual guidance in his days at AC Milan.

when the name Paolo Di Canio is not automatically proceeded by words like hotheaded, volatile or just plain crazy.

None other than Marcello Lippi rates him as highly as Maradona, Benito Carbone puts him above Dennis Bergkamp and the man who brought him to Britain, then-Celtic boss Tommy



Paolo Di Canio: Misunderstood genius or misguided Italian?



KEEGAN TO STAY

Kevin Keegan has insisted he would not turn his back on England if they failed to come up to scratch in next year's European championship finals.

Referring to remarks he made before the World Cup qualifying draw in Tokyo last month, the England coach was quoted as saying: "I never used the word quit. I never said I would go if we failed."

"What I said was the World Cup was great and I was really looking forward to the draw and all the games but, let's be honest, the team and I need a good Euro 2000."

"That has to be the priority. That is what I have got to focus on because if we don't then maybe the World Cup will be beyond me. Where's the quit in there?"

"I want to keep this job for as long as I can."

Keegan said he had never had any regrets about taking the England job.

"I took the job because I wanted it."



Kevin Keegan: I'm not quitting.

I want it even more now. But I am a realist...the performances have got to improve under me and I know they will."

England qualified for Euro 2000 only after beating Scotland in a playoff.

FUTURE IN DOUBT FOR DENILSON

A club-versus-country row has put the future of Brazilian winger Denilson at Real Betis in doubt.

Denilson, the third most expensive footballer of all time, has been named in Brazil's under-23 squad for a pre-Olympic tournament starting on January 19, meaning he would be absent from Betis for the first five weeks of the New Year.

Betis claim they agreed with Denilson that he would not join the squad until January 17, enabling him to play in the club's first three matches of year 2000. "We can't pay out huge sums and then not have the player available," a Betis spokesman said.

Denilson, through his agent Luiz Vianna, denies any deal was made. "If there's a problem about his joining up with Brazil, then the best thing would be to arrange a move for him," it was reported.

The Spanish press say club president Manuel Ruiz de Lopera has threatened to cancel Denilson's marketing contract with the club if the player fails to report for the first two weeks in January.

The 22-year-old winger joined Real Betis from Sao Paulo in what was then a world record \$34.6 million deal in August 1997 and arrived at the club a year later.

His performances with the Seville side have not



Denilson: Club vs Country rears its ugly head again.

justified his mammoth price tag, and in his first season he scored only two goals.

Following the departure of Betis's coach of last season Javier Clemente, Denilson's performances improved slightly, although he has still only one goal so far this season.

ROMARIO SIGNS AUTOGRAPHS FOR LOSING TEAM



Romario: A star even to his opponents.

Vasco da Gama striker Romario scored two goals in a 4-1 friendly win over African champions Raja Casablanca, then signed autographs for his star-struck opponents.

Players from the Moroccan club ran to surround the former Brazil international at the final whistle, asking for his autograph and posing with him for photographs.

The game was a warm-up for this month's world club championship in which both teams are taking part.

Romario, signed last month from Vasco's arch-rivals Flamengo, had an outstanding match and also set up a number of good chances for his team mates.

Former Brazil defender Junior Baiano made his Vasco debut.



Hidetoshi Nakata: A move to Roma seems likely.

AS Roma have struck a deal with Serie A rivals Perugia to buy Hidetoshi Nakata and will try to coax the Japanese midfielder to Rome in early January.

It was reported that Roma would pay around 30 billion lire (\$15.56 million) for the Asian Player of the Year and would throw in unsettled Russian midfielder Dmitri Alenitchev as part exchange.

Perugia paid just \$3.3 million for Nakata when they signed him from J.League side Bellmare Hiratsuka 18 months ago.

No one was available to comment on the reports at Roma. A Perugia spokesman confirmed the two clubs were in contact over Nakata but said no definitive deal had been reached.

The reports said Nakata would almost certainly join Roma but might choose to wait until the end of the season.

But Roma want to sign him as soon as the Italian winter transfer window opens on January 4 to bolster

their recently flagging league campaign.

Fabio Capello's side were top of Serie A in early December but lost their final two matches before the Christmas break and have slipped to fourth.

They also lost Brazilian midfielder Assuncao for a month last week when he twisted his knee in training and they might be tempted back into the transfer market for a replacement.

Italian champions AC Milan and UEFA Cup holders Parma were waiting in the wings to snap up Nakata if he failed to agree on a move to Roma.

Newspapers also said Roma were trying to push through a deal to buy Brazil's Emerson from Germany's Bayer Leverkusen.

Midfielder Emerson has been linked with Roma for months and has reportedly agreed to join them at the end of this season.

Roma would prefer to sign him immediately.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

	Total							Home							Away						
	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS	P	W	D	L	F	A		P	W	D	L	F	A	
SYDNEY OLYMPIC*	13	9	2	2	23	10	29	6	3	2	1	10	6		7	6	0	1	13	4	
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	15	7	5	3	29	22	26	7	5	0	2	15	10		8	2	5	1	14	12	
CARLTON	13	7	4	2	26	13	25	7	4	2	1	14	7		6	3	2	1	12	6	
BRISBANE STRIKERS	14	7	4	3	21	13	25	7	3	3	1	14	8		7	4	1	2	7	5	
PERTH GLORY*	13	7	3	3	27	16	24	7	4	2	1	18	9		6	3	1	2	9	7	
NEWCASTLE BREAKERS	14	6	5	3	19	17	23	7	3	3	1	12	10		7	3	2	2	7	7	
MARCONI STALLIONS	14	7	2	5	19	18	23	6	4	0	2	7	7		8	3	2	3	12	11	
SOUTH MELBOURNE	14	5	3	6	22	21	18	7	4	2	1	16	7		7	1	1	5	6	14	
GIPPSLAND FALCONS	14	4	5	5	10	14	17	7	2	2	3	5	6		7	2	3	2	5	8	
AUCKLAND KINGZ**	13	4	4	5	22	25	16	6	1	3	2	10	14		7	3	1	3	12	11	
NORTHERN SPIRIT	14	5	1	8	12	21	16	6	2	0	4	4	10		8	3	1	4	8	11	
PARRAMATTA POWER	14	4	3	6	23	26	15	8	2	3	3	11	11		6	2	0	4	12	15	
ADELAIDE CITY FORCE	14	3	5	6	14	17	14	6	2	2	2	8	7		8	1	3	4	6	10	
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	14	4	1	9	14	27	13	7	3	0	4	6	7		7	1	1	5	8	20	
CANBERRA COSMOS**	13	3	2	8	16	25	11	8	2	1	5	10	11		5	1	1	3	6	14	
SYDNEY UNITED	14	2	3	9	8	20	9	8	2	1	5	5	10		6	0	2	4	3	10	

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS

(Moore 2)

SYDNEY UNITED

1

0

Venue: Breakers Stadium **Crowd:** 6,816 **Referee:** D Dwight
Cautions: Bosnar (SU) 33, Harper (NB) 37, Trpceviski (NB) 68.
Teams: Newcastle Breakers: Catlin, Pryce, Roberts, McManus, Sprod, Dodd (Smith 78), Wilson, Tancheski (Trpceviski 57), Buonavoglia, Harper (Tomich 87), Moore
Sydney United: Tolios, Bosnar, Savocca, Arrarte, Pondeljask, Maric, Rastall, Genc, Moric, Boseviski (Deak 72), Luff.

MARCONI STALLIONS

(Trajanovski 45, Karl 87 & 93)

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

3

0

Venue: Marconi Stadium **Crowd:** 4,136 **Referee:** C Diomis
Cautions: McDonald (MS) 55, Magdic (MK) 72, Duric (MS) 76.
Teams: Marconi Stallions: Turnbull: Smith, Farah, Gibson, Renaud (M.Babic 65): McDonald, Care, Maloney, Zoric: Duric (Severino 90), Trajanovski (Karl 85).
Melbourne Knights: John: Abbas (Vassalo 62), Kovacevic, Rajher, Magdic (Urlovic 73rd): Nastevski, Kiratzoglou, Silic, Susa (Reda 46): Kelic, A. Cervinski.

LEADING GOALSCORERS

P Foster	(Brisbane Strikers)	9
A Moreira	(Carlton SC)	9
M Curcija	(Sth Melbourne)	8
S Petrovski	(Wollongong Wolves)	8
C Boutsianis	(Perth Glory)	7
J Buonavoglia	(Newcastle Breakers)	7
E Masi	(Wollongong Wolves)	7
D Mori	(Adelaide City Force)	7
P Cardozo	(Sydney Olympic)	6
B Despotovski	(Perth Glory)	6
J Griffiths	(Parramatta Power)	6
I Kelic	(Melbourne Knights)	6
A Marth	(Carlton SC)	6

NORTHERN SPIRIT

0

BRISBANE STRIKERS

2

(McLaren 18, Grierson 28)

Venue: North Sydney Oval **Crowd:** 6,714 **Referee:** G Connolly
Cautions: Cunico (NS) 31, Foster (BS) 71.
Teams: Northern Spirit: Perosh, Crook (Snyder 43), Bilokapic, Cunico, Lyons (Moss 80), T.Cranney, Bingley, Casserly, Slater, Perinich, Seal (R.Griffiths 59).
Brisbane Strikers: Brisbane: Bolton, Stefanutto Gwynne, McLaren, Davidson, Harris (Pilic 69), Meredith, Ditton, North, Grierson, Foster.

GIPPSLAND FALCONS

(Hutchinson 50)

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE

1

1

Venue: Falcons Stadium **Crowd:** 2,398 **Referee:** B Hugo
Cautions: Mori (ACF) 28, Tobin (ACF) 38, Pelosi (ACF) 52.
Teams: Gippsland Falcons: Jevdjovic, Fak, Gotis, Durakovic, MacNicol, Vargas, Bell, Hutchinson, Kakos (Mandic 65), Marcina, Nilo.
Adelaide City Force: Knezevic, Tobin, Talladira (Kemp 83), Mori (Brain 83), Veart, Sabljak, Vidmar, Costanzo, Hassell, Pelosi, Kim.

WOLLONGONG WOLVES

(Masi 2, 10, 58, Chipperfield 56)

PARRAMATTA POWER

(Burns 7, Byrnes 16, Sterjovski 72)

4

3

Venue: Brandon Park **Crowd:** 3,844 **Referee:** E Lennie
Cautions: Berry (PP) 33, Bennett (PP) 52, Petrovski (WW) 73, Spencer (WW) 76, Eagleton (PP) 84, Cervinski (WW) 85.
Teams: Wollongong Wolves: Pogliacomi, Souris, Ceccoli, Stanton, Cervinski, Horsley, Chipperfield, Spencer (Surjan 80), Petrovski, Huxley (Harlock 78), Masi (Dimech 89)
Parramatta Power: Crews, Barrett, Santalab (Angelucci 68), Eagleton, Burns, Sterjovski, Griffiths, Berry (Gibson 72), Blagojevic, Byrnes, Bennett.

*Sydney Olympic

v

Perth Glory

* Due to deadline constraints the Sydney Olympic v Perth Glory result was unable to be included in this week's issue. Results and match report in next week's issue.

ABSW PLAYER OF THE YEAR (PROGRESSIVE POINTS)

TURN TO PAGE 14

**Auckland Kingz

v

Canberra Cosmos

* Due to deadline constraints the Auckland Kingz v Canberra Cosmos result was unable to be included in this week's issue. Results and match report in next week's issue.

South Melbourne

v

Carlton SC

* Due to South Melbourne's commitment to the World Club Championship in Brazil, the round 14 game against Carlton will now be played on March 1, 2000.

ROUND FIFTEEN

Friday 7 January: Adelaide Force v Canberra Cosmos Hindmarsh Stadium 8pm.
 Carlton SC v Auckland Kingz Olympic Park 8.15pm. Newcastle Breakers v Sydney Olympic Breakers Stadium 7.30pm, Northern Spirit v Sydney United North Sydney Oval 8pm.
Saturday 8 January: Brisbane Strikers v Melbourne Knights Suncorp Metway Stadium 7pm.
Sunday 9 January: Perth Glory v Gippsland Falcons Perth Oval 5pm. Marconi Stallions v Parramatta Power Postponed TBA

(all times provided are local times)